

The Defeat of Death-Part 4
How God Solved Our Inevitable Problem
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, if you've ever been to Paris, you know there are lots of things to see in Paris. But one thing you probably won't get a chance to see is a little inch and a half diameter by inch and a half tall cylinder of platinum alloy. It's safely ensconced in a building in the suburbs of Paris and they're not going to let you take a look at it. It's kept under lock and key. It's a very important little cylinder of platinum. Even if it were pure platinum it would only be worth about \$25,000. But this one's worth a whole lot more and they're careful to guard it. This cylinder was made back in the 1800s and it's known as the I. P. K. The International Prototype Kilogram. It is the standard kilogram by which all other kilograms are measured. Have you ever thought about that? This kilogram sits in a Paris suburb is this little cylinder that is the exact weight that every other weight in the world, in the developed world at least, is measured by. And there are cylinders, identical cylinders, are made of this cylinder and weighed against the cylinder and they're sent to all the other countries so that everything can be calibrated in all the weighing scales all over the world.

It affects everything. In sales it affects everything all the way down to the produce aisle of your grocery store when you try and weigh your grapes to find out how much they're going to cost. That little cylinder is the standard and the measure by which every other standard and measure is calibrated.

Can you imagine the fraud that can take place if you don't have a standard? Matter of fact, it's still an issue of great opportunity for fraud and for crime. Back in biblical times it was a lot easier to get away with it because you didn't have somebody coming around a little certified sticker to put on all of your scales. We can't go to the gas station without a pump that's certified. We can't go and buy a pound of ground beef where there's not a certified scale that weighs it. But back in the ancient days when you had bags and weights and scales and all these things you'd figure out. I mean, God says, there's so much opportunity for abuse. You need to know, as Leviticus 19 says, it's put this way, "You should not do wrong," when it comes to "measures and lengths and weights and quantities." You should have just balances and just weights. Proverbs says, "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight."

When it came to merchants and what they were holding out and offering, dispensing to their generation in the marketplace, God expected accuracy, he expected standards, he expected calibration, he expected fairness in all of that. God was watching. Matter of fact, a very interesting way that it was put in Proverbs, Chapter 16 verse 11, it says, "A just balance and scales are the Lord's." When it comes to a scale, you've got to think about like God's got a standard he expects you to calibrate your standard to his standards so that everything you do in the marketplace can be weighed by that. "All the weights in the bag," that you use to weigh things up, "are his work," God's work.

When it comes to what Christians are holding out and dispensing to our generation, a message, God expects accuracy. He expects standards. He expects a very careful calibration. Matter of fact, a very famous passage you've heard many times about studying "to show ourselves approved unto God," or "a workman doesn't need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." Literally, to cut it straight, to make sure that what you have going on when you dispense the truth to other people is accurately, carefully, calibrated, measured, weighed. Everything is exactly what it ought to be.

And thankfully when Christians are commissioned to take the message of the good news of the Gospel to other people, God says I have a standard and I've given it to you. It's codified in the pages of this

book that is unique no matter what the world wants to say about attacking it. The more you study what it says and you weigh it against every other book in this world you come to recognize God has left us with a flawless standard by which everything, every philosopher, every theologian, every man on the street who's got an idea about God, it has to all be weighed against that book. As we end here on the penultimate sermon in Luke, one more to go, we see in this passage Jesus commissioning his disciples and talking about this very, very important message. It was nothing new. You'll see how it's set up here in verse 44. This is what he's been telling them the whole time, but now that it's all been accomplished and he's about to unleash them into the world, which basically is a setup for the book of Acts, is a good summation of what's coming up in the book of Acts, Luke says, here is what Jesus had to say about how everything in our message is calibrated.

Take a look at it with me if you haven't turned there already, Luke Chapter 24. We're almost to the end of the book. We've got this last set of six verses before we hit the very concluding statement here in the book. I want you to see this as I read it for you, follow along, Luke Chapter 24, we'll look at these six verses beginning in verse 44. I'll read them from the English Standard Version as it says, "Then he said to them," here's Jesus speaking to that group that's gathered, his apostles are a part of this. "These are my words I spoke to you while I was still with you." We're going to carry on with the same message, everything I've said. What's important is it's in propositional black and white statements, objective statements, "everything written about me," and he goes back to the first five books of the Bible, the Law of Moses, the Pentateuch, Genesis through Deuteronomy, "and the Prophets," this next section of the Hebrew Bible, all those prophetic statements, and then the writings, it's often called, it starts with the book of Psalms, "the Psalms."

So all three segments of the Old Testament, containing the 39 books of the Old Testament, he says all of that, he says, has got to be fulfilled, everything written about me "must be fulfilled." Then he gets in their brain, spiritually speaking, in verse 45, and "he opens their minds to understand the Scriptures." "And he said to them," as you would expect, "thus it is written," here's what the Bible says, and you've seen it all play out in front of you, "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed," there's our commission, must be proclaimed, "in his name," it's all about Christ, "to all nations beginning from Jerusalem." There is the beginning of the book of Acts right there. The whole book of Acts explains these concentric circles of this message of repentance going out from Jerusalem. And he says you're witnesses, "You are witnesses of these things." You've seen them play out, you've read the Scriptures, you've looked at the history, you're going to write the history, guys, and make it very clear of what happened here. And he says, "Behold, I'm sending the promise of my Father upon you." You want to see people repent? I'm going to give you what I promised to you. He doesn't designate it here, he's designated it throughout the book, but he says you're going to, "Stay in the city until you're clothed with power from on high." A clear reference to their encounter with the Holy Spirit in their lives that would change everything about the effectiveness and the effectual nature of their sharing of the message of repentance. What a great set of six verses.

I'll make a few observations this morning that I think will be helpful for us as we think about what God would have us do in our day when measuring this message that we're supposed to give to our generation is probably in the greatest need it's been in our country for decades, if not since the founding of our country. Verses 44 and 45. Just a reminder that it all comes back to Scripture. "He said to them, "These are my words I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, they must be fulfilled." And he said, guys, understand this. "He opened their minds to understand the Scripture." Our message is to send this Christ-centered, saving, salvific message to our neighbors and our co-workers and, in our case, our



entire generation, not just here locally but around the world to every nation. We continue this quest that started in the book of Acts. It started here in the Great Commission.

But I want to tell you when it comes to what we're giving to this world it has to be biblically defined. I put it this way, number one, if you're taking notes, we need to "Keep Our Evangelism Biblical." By that I mean in everything that we say it needs to be biblically defined. This is where I want to warn you and this will sound a little, I don't know, I hate to say the sky is falling and it's not. I mean, the Church is alive and well, the gates of hell will not prevail against it. But what you see as the Church is not always a church that is presenting the message that God gave us to present. It is easy to get distracted. And in our day you can talk about biblical concepts, you can talk about church words, you can talk about Christian ideas, and define them all wrong.

I remember when I was a kid I must have said something in the context, perhaps of hunting, when I heard for the first time the word "flush" being used in a context I wasn't used to as a little kid. That was, you know, that you were going to flush the birds out of their brush, out of the cover and you'd flush them out. Well, I must have giggled because my dad got into describing all the ways the word flush is used. You can get flush in your face, it turns red. You can have a royal flush when you're playing cards. You can be flush with cash. There are all kinds of ways to use that word. Of course, I'm giggling the whole time thinking there's only one definition for the word flush, dad, flush the toilet. That's what the word flush means.

And I learned, obviously ever since, that the more you learn about the language that we speak, not to mention when I started to study other languages, you better know exactly what the intended purpose of the use of that word in its original context, what it was intended to mean, because there are a lot of words, think of all the words, I mean you've got some in the Oxford English Dictionary with over 200 definitions in the dictionary because these words can be used in so many different ways. Now, it's not a hopeless endeavor. Matter of fact, people in courts every single day all across our country and all over the world trying to make it clear what I meant by that contract, what I said and what I meant and what the law said and what it meant. When it always comes down to what it meant, that is something that is so critical in our day that we say, when God gave us a message we've got to define things biblically. We've got to make sure that these words and these concepts are biblically defined.

You see the word I used in the first point, I had you jot it down, it's the word evangelism. Evangelism, let's just start with that word. The word evangelism is a transliterated word into English. That means it's not translated, it's transliterated. The words from Greek, the letters from the New Testament Greek just go right into English and the Greek word "euangelion" becomes the word "evangelism." "eu" is the particle for good, something that's "eu." I know it sounds like it's gross, "eu." No, but you say it oooh! "eu" is "good" in Greek and "angelion," we get the word "angel" from that. Angel is the messenger, the angelion is the message. So the word evangelism means good news and that's not news to you but, perhaps it's not, perhaps it is, the idea is that we are giving good news to our generation.

The question though is, I mean just two simple questions. What is the news and why is it good? And if you want to define these things biblically you're going to find out that the modern churches are going to define the news sometimes differently, but those who know biblical words, biblical concepts, they're going to admit this is what it's about. It's about you being saved. It's about you being forgiven. It's about you having a relationship with God. Right? Even in our context, it's about the repentance for the forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed. Well that's the news. We got a news that we're giving to the world and it's about salvation, it's about forgiveness, it's about a relationship with God. That's the content of the news.

But when you ask the question: why is it good? Why am I presenting to my neighbor good news? That's where in our day, and Satan is great at this, taking that message with those words and concepts, redefining them in a way where the goodness, the appeal to the non-Christian, is much different than what it is in the Bible.

Let's think about the word salvation real quick. If I were to ask the average person, who gets acquainted with biblical concepts and biblical words, what are we saved from? Right? If I say I got saved this afternoon you're going to say saved from what? What kind of peril, what kind of danger were you in? And if you think about our day when you ask the question what does the word salvation mean and how are we saved and what are we saved from? People are going to have a lot of answers for that. Matter of fact, the best-selling books in our world are going to tell us there are lots of things you're saved from if you would become a Christian. You get a relationship with God, you get forgiveness, you're going to be saved from a lot of things that you would otherwise have if you weren't saved. And they're going to look at very temporal things, the "here and now" things.

They're going to talk about things like, well, you know, you have a relationship with God so you will no longer be walking through life alone. You'll have help, you won't be lonely, or maybe you're without purpose and so you're going to get purpose, and maybe you haven't had meaning in life and when you become a Christian you going to have meaning in life, and maybe you haven't had joy, you going to have joy and be saved from joylessness and grief or pain. There are all kinds of things that people will say you're being saved from, but the Bible is very, very clear about what we mean when we say we're saved. Not a very friendly verse to share with your neighbor, but when you're trying to say, "Hey, get forgiveness, get salvation, get relationship with God." And they say, "Well, what does that mean? Why do I need that? Why is that good?" If you start talking about purpose, meaning, loneliness, to be saved from all those bad things, you'll get all these good things, they will say, "Well, that sounds interesting. I might want to try that."

But if you give them what the biblical definition of salvation is, which as it says in First Thessalonians 1, is that when we trust in Christ we are saved from the blank that is to come. You know what the blank is? The wrath that is to come. "Wrath? Who's mad?" Who's mad, Sunday school grads? God. Who's saving us? God. "God? Wait a minute. So God is basically saving us from himself, is that what you're saying?" Now you got it. That's the biblical definition. Does that make any sense to people? That doesn't make sense to people. Well, if God's mad at us, why doesn't he stop being mad at us?" Right? That would be great, just say, "Well, I'm not mad at you anymore."

See, the whole point of every example we have in Scripture, including Christ when he talks about salvation, he analogizes this to the Old Testament book of Genesis. He says, "It is much like in the days of Noah," when God is mad at the world because of their sin. Not mad like kick the dog, you know, frustrated employee who's yelling at his wife in this capricious expression of his anger. But like a judge sitting on a bench with a robe and a gavel in his hand who is indignant over the criminal who stands before his tribunal. I'm talking about that kind of wrath, that kind of anger. And that God is going to send a flood on the world and he says, "But first I'm going to provide a means of salvation so I'm going to have Noah build an ark. Now there will be salvation." And in his love he provides a way of escape. Here's a way to be saved from what? "From my flood. I'm going to come and I'm going to destroy the world but I'll give you a way out and you can be saved from my judgment if you get in the ark." That's how Jesus talked about salvation. He didn't say if you're without meaning follow me. If you're without purpose follow me. He said "Listen, you need to be saved. I came to give my life as a ransom for many so that you'd be saved from the wrath that is to come."



We deserve God's judgment. The biblical definition of salvation is the salvation from something that every person has to understand is a fault, is a transgression, is a sin in their own life multiplied a thousand times over, even in our consciousness of our own transgression that we deserve the judgment of God. Now when I pitched to my neighbor you need to be saved from loneliness, purposelessness, meaninglessness, they're going to say, "Well, I might want to check that church out. I might want to read your Bible. I might want to go and see what this is all about." When you say you need to be saved from the wrath that is to come that's a whole different story. But that's keeping our evangelism biblical.

I talk about forgiveness. "Well, how can that be misunderstood?" There are some people who are pitching forgiveness in pulpits and in conversations in workrooms this week as one Christian is sharing with a non-Christian and they're pitching forgiveness as something that will be good for you. "Don't you want to get rid of that backpack of guilt? Don't you want to be free from that sense of being guilty? Don't you want to have that burden lifted off your chest?" And they say, "Wouldn't this be good for you to be forgiven?" Repentance for the forgiveness of sins, you can even use those words and still come to a very self-focused, advantageous, wouldn't it be good for you to feel better kind of a pitch. That's not what the Bible says. You think about the tribunal. The real concern is what God thinks about you, not what I think about myself. And the real concern is I need forgiveness to be granted to me because God is a God who is indignant over my sin and transgression and what I need him to be is no longer hostile toward me, not just for my benefit, but for the sake that I have violated a holy and perfect, pure, righteous creator. The forgiveness I need is for God to no longer be in a place of frustration and anger over my sin.

Relationship with God. Clearly we speak in those terms. We say we've got a message and the message is you need to be right with God and reconciled to God. Why is that good? Well, because then you'll have God in your life. Won't that be great? There are advantages in Scripture having God in our lives. We get that. We can quote passages about God being our helper, that's true. But that's really not the idea in Scripture. Jesus presents himself primarily as a king, a king with subjects. Subjects who see that when they do everything that God asks them to do that they say, as we learned in Luke, "We're unworthy slaves, we've only done that which we ought to have done." That's how it's presented in the Bible.

And if you think about that, God says listen, here's the right thing in the universe, God. God at the center of your life, God at the center of your thinking, God is at the center of your theology and your philosophy and every other thing you think of, your logic. That God wants to be God and everything else gets straight. And that doesn't keep you at the center and God at the edge to be your butler or your genie or your life coach. But it puts him in the center and you see yourself as his servants and that even if you did everything you ought to do, like the angels in heaven, we ought to bow down and say this is the right thing. It's copacetic with reality because I'm doing what God created me to do. Keep your evangelism biblical. There's so much we can say about it. But I need you to start by recognizing that it's easy for us to pervert and redefine these good sounding concepts with some very man-centered, selfish definitions. Keep your definitions biblical. It's all weighed against Scripture.

It's just like we see when the erudition of our Supreme Court justices can't even all agree that the intent of a document that was written to found our country should be interpreted based on what it meant by the authors who wrote it. I mean, if you see this as a living document, as so many people do, and by that they mean it can change based on the whims of the receptor and not the intent of the author, we've got a big problem. As a matter of fact, what we see going on in judicial philosophy today is the very



thing that's been going on in seminaries for the last 100 years and that is deciding whether or not we're going to stick with the intention of the author or the feelings of the receptor. I don't want to go to a Bible study when we read the Bible and go around the circle and ask the question, "What does that mean to you?" It really doesn't matter what it means to you. It matters what God meant when he wrote it. And so we need to be keeping our evangelism biblical and every word needs to be defined, every concept needs to be defined biblically.

Verse 46 and 47, "He said to them, 'Thus it is written...'" What kinds of things were written? Well, there's an issue of atonement. There's an issue of forgiveness. There's an issue of expiation of sins, there's propitiation. There's something that should happen that has this Messiah suffer and die. There's so much he said about that in the Gospel of Luke. That Christ is going to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" Like the Old Testament picture of having an animal sacrifice on an altar. The picture is the innocent needs to die so the guilty can be forgiven.

And then "on the third day he's going to rise again." The last three sermons have been all about that. The point is that the resurrection of Christ is the fulfillment and capstone of everything the Atonement was supposed to accomplish, that "the wages of sin is death" and he takes care of the sin problem and the death problem should be reversed and it should be the ultimate vindication, the ultimate verification that everything that God was looking for in humanity has been fulfilled in Christ. That is all tied up in the concept of the Old Testament foreshadowing of the resurrection of Christ, which we see as we looked at earlier in our series on display in passages like Isaiah 53. So that the message that we bring, "repentance" in this case for the forgiveness of sins "should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, everyone, beginning here at Jerusalem."

When he does this, this is the third time in this passage that we see these concepts. Actually, the fourth time I suppose if you think carefully about how they put: the sufferings and the glory, the crucifixion and the resurrection, the sufferings and the glory, the crucifixion and the resurrection. The idea of the message of the Gospel is bound up in a summarized format here in this simple statement. It's good for us to realize that God has an essential corpus of what the Gospel is, and we can't leave those things out.

This closely relates to number one, but if we're going to keep our evangelism biblical, everything we present to our neighbors and friends in our generation has to be biblically defined. We can't say, "Well, I'll biblically define this because this one feels pretty good, God loves us, he's merciful and he's gracious, but this one over here doesn't feel good so I'll just tuck that in the back and I won't present that to my neighbors and friends." The Gospel needs to be fully presented. We need to have a kind of full-orbed Gospel presentation, which doesn't mean we hand them a Bible and say, "Good luck with that. Read it and if you have questions call me." But we should say to them, "Listen, here are the high points of the Gospel and I can't leave out the essentials."

I put it this way, number two, you need to make sure you "Don't Leave Out the Essentials." There are essential elements of the Gospel repeated throughout the Scripture. They reach the highest place of prominence in the book of Acts and we'll study those, Lord willing, in the fall. We will have a chance for us to see that the Gospel is not all that mysterious. It's there, it's on the surface and when it comes down to it, it always includes things like the suffering of Christ on a cross, the empty tomb and the fact that we should respond with a penitent confidence in what Christ has accomplished for us.

I don't want to go negative here but I should say there's a lot of very popular books that are saying in our generation just leave this part out. And there's, I mean, without question you know this because



you feel the same thing that I feel when I have to present the full-orbed Gospel. People ask me to share the Gospel at a wedding or share the Gospel at some party or some whatever, and I say, "Are you sure you want to share the Gospel because the Gospel starts, really, after we understand who God is, with the problem we have called sin. You want me to really call everyone out in the auditorium about their sin during your wedding. Is that what you want?" I'm all about putting Christ on display but you want the Gospel? Do you know the Gospel really is only good news when you understand the bad news of sin? There are entire movements within really hip, cool, evangelical Christianity today, that say let's just leave that all out.

The best-selling book on the New York Times, the best-selling book, written by a "Christian leader" in "evangelicalism" telling us that we just need to take that whole concept of God being mad at sin and just get rid of that. Just take it out. Just stop with that. Matter of fact, he puts it this way: "If there's something here in the Jesus story that makes your stomach churn and your pulse rate rise, well those things need to stop. We need to get these out." He writes an entire book on the fact that Christians don't need this forgiveness that is different than what goes on with the rest of the world because God is love and, if God is love, there'd be no justice for them and salvation for us. In the end everything's going to work out because God is a loving God. So let's stop with this exclusivity of us being the kinds of people who get this forgiveness as though sin isn't just overlooked by God altogether. A best-selling book.

Here's another one just a few years before. "We just need to look at the book, the Bible, and just read it differently. If you could just see that the early things we read in the Bible, they were the early, primitive views of God. You need to get comfortable," he says, "with a picture of an evolving Bible. Get comfortable with that." And he says, "When I started to get comfortable with the idea of an evolving Bible," this author says, "the more I found myself able to love and enjoy the Bible." That's helpful. "And I think I've learned to love and enjoy God as well, if I can just take whole swaths of the Bible and say I don't like that, so I'm going to extract it." Right? "I think you'll have the same experience. Just sit down and experiment with this approach."

Well, that's like saying I just want to go through this line at the salad bar and just pick what I like. And you're right, you can do that and you're going to leave out the stuff you don't like. I never praise my mailman at the end of the driveway for sorting my mail out and deciding what he thinks I'm not going to like there. I prefer he just deliver the mail, that's his job. We certainly have that job when it comes to sin. I know I don't like to talk about it. I know it's not pleasant to talk about. But if I'm going to share the Gospel with my generation I need to recognize that that is my job. I'm going to have to say the whole reason Jesus came is to suffer for sin, the whole reason I need to repent is because I'm a sinner. And of course, the problem with sin is the justice that was put on display on the cross and that is the reality that God is going to judge sin.

The Bible is very clear that Christ suffered for sins, the righteous one for the unrighteous people, that he might bring us to God. He was put to death in the flesh. That was an act of God's judgment upon sin. God made him, Second Corinthians Chapter 5, "Who knew no sin," he was innocent, "to be sin," treated like he was the sinner, "so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God." The substitutionary atonement of Christ we call it. The penal substitutionary atonement. It was a just, legal transaction of my sin being laid on him. He stands in for me and he then, in humanity, suffers for the sins that I should be suffering for, therefore I can go free. Substitution. He got what I deserved and I now get what he deserved. That's the picture of the cross.

And yet that same author puts it this way, "If God wants to forgive us why didn't he just forgive us?"

How does punishing an innocent person make things better?" This is an evangelical pastor and leader in our generation. "That just sounds like one more injustice in the big cosmic equation. Actually, it sounds like divine child abuse," he writes. So God, now, if I understand the passages of Scripture correctly, looking at the authorial intent of what was intended there, I now see God as a "divine child abuser." That's where we're at in modern evangelicalism. All I got to do is say, "Well, let's just have an evolving view of the Bible. If I don't like that part, I'll just say well that's a primitive view of God. I am going to have a more responsible, grown-up view of God, and I'm just going to look the other way when it comes to those ideas of Christ's suffering for sin and me needing to repent."

I understand this is a very uncomfortable topic but as I often do I put books on the back that touch on various concepts that we have. A very good book, if you're only going to get one book from my reading list this week, get the one on "Modern Scholarship Reinvents Hell." That one book, just looking at the doctrine of hell, if you take that out of the mix, everything else starts to collapse and it will. You start going soft on the passages that are clearly intending for us to understand there is a coming judgment and an accountability for sinful actions, then everything else will soon collapse and that's where we are in the modern church. Not every church obviously, we're not the only one that preaches the truth. But I am saying the Bible is clear, the forecast is going from darkness to increasing darkness and before the dawn of Christ appearing, it's going to be really hard for us as people accumulate for themselves teachers who are going to satisfy what they want to hear. It's depicted that way. They have itching ears. They just want someone to scratch that itch and say, "That's what you want to hear? I'll give you a god that meets that qualification."

One more thing, I think, we don't want to talk about sin, we don't want to talk about judgment and we certainly don't want to talk about Christ being the only way. And in this passage, verse 47, I'm supposed to go out and say "in his name," in Christ's name, you need to repent so that you can be forgiven, "in his name." You need to focus this message on Christ and who does it need to go to? "All the nations," verse 47. Everyone. Start here, go to your next door neighbor, go down the block, go around the corner, go to the suburbs and hit this entire planet with this message. Why? Because it's the only way. I mean that's the whole point. As Acts unfolds the picture is in Acts Chapter 4 verse 12, "There's no other name given among men by which we must be saved." This is God's only means, the exclusivity of the message of the Gospel.

Do you know that's an increasingly unpopular view? As a matter of fact, it's considered a wrong view. I quoted this last week when I read the new Barna Report, a very extensive survey on millennials. Millennials, when it comes to just the concept of evangelism, close to 50% of these young people in Christian cultures, in churches, they think it is wrong, that's a moral category, they think it is wrong to evangelize. Period, not a comma. It's wrong to evangelize. And you see why? Because when it comes to what you think about God, that's just as valid as what I think about God. And you can get to that if you get back to that idea that the original authorial intent doesn't matter. Really, you can read that book and decide whatever it means to you. If you want to slide it aside and say, "I'll pick the Koran instead, or I'll follow Buddha's teaching instead, or I'll get the principles of Confucius and I'll live by that, or I just want to be a happy atheist or agnostic. Fine. I don't need to convince you of my way because my way is no more valid than your way." And we have 50% of the "evangelical church-going millennials" saying, "I don't even believe I should try and convince anyone that I'm right and they're wrong," we've got a problem. And that's where we're at.

We've got people leaving out very important swaths, the essentials of the Gospel and here's the essential of the Gospel. We've got to get it out to all the nations. Why is that? Well, it's because if they don't get it they're not going to be saved, that's been driving the missions movement from the



beginning of the book of Acts. And today we don't even think it's necessary. Why in the world would I go to a foreign country? Why would I even go across the street? Why would I go outside the walls of this building and care about anyone else believing in Christ, if I think they're just as well-off as I am?

See, the only way to get this right and to understand the predicated foundation of the Gospel is to realize that the problem of a sinking ship is real and the solution is a lifeboat and that's the only way out. There's no jetpack in your imagination, there's no helicopter flying in, there's a lifeboat. It's been lovingly provided. There is a flood coming on the world and there's a barge out back that Noah has built. It's available, the door is open. For me to sit around say, "Well, you don't want to believe that, that's fine." It goes against not only the absolute nature of truth and truth has hard edges and we can't get around that. If it's real, if God is holy and we're sinful, we deserve his judgment and there is a coming day of accountability, then I should take his word seriously.

Turn to one quick passage with me please. Acts Chapter 20. I want you to leave with a sense of..., well one, responsibility but, two, a sense of satisfaction that when you fulfill that responsibility you've done something that relieves your conscience, something that gives you a sense that you did your job. We're holding out the Gospel to our generation and if you only hand out pieces of it, it's not going to work. The Apostle Paul was very faithful when he went to Ephesus, he stayed there three years, and he ministered among them and he was leaving, and as he goes to the coastal city here to say goodbye to those leaders, look at verse 20, this is Acts 20:20. He says, "I didn't shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you in public and from house to house."

Here's a guy who knows he's got to get outside of the walls of the synagogue and the marketplace and get into people's lives. "Testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Those two go together. They are two distinct components of one essential response. They're distinctly defined, they go together, you can't be saved if you don't respond. Talk about an essential element, I got a call-in radio show I host a couple of weeks back, maybe it was last week, "Hey, is repentance really a necessary part of the Gospel?" Absolutely it is. It's an essential part of the Gospel. It's the whole point. "If you don't repent you will likewise perish." It's said over and over and over again in Scripture. Sometimes we see the word repentance without faith, sometimes we see faith without repentance. These are two component parts, distinctly defined, but inseparable in the response that we're calling our world to. A penitent trust in Christ.

It says, "Now, I'm going to leave you," verse 22, "and go to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me, except I know this: the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I receive from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God." I would like you to see that though you're not a professional preacher, maybe a couple of you are, but most of you are just normal Christians. Right? I don't have a microphone, I'm never teaching Bible study, it doesn't matter. We all have the responsibility to testify to the Gospel of grace to our generation. The people who you hang out with, the people you rub shoulders with, we have a responsibility to share this message. And he says, "I just want to finish it. I don't care what it cost me, I don't care what it does to my life or my comfort. I just want to finish the course" "to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God.

And now behold," verse 25, "I know that none among you whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day," here's the clear conscience part, follow this, verse 26, "that I'm innocent of the blood of all." That's an old idiom to talk about the fact that if anyone incurs God's judgment here, that's not on me, it's not on me. Why? "For I did not shrink



from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." Now, you can look back to the beginning of this passage, verse 20, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable." And what's profitable? It's the whole council of God. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation. "Here, read it and call me if you have any questions?" No.

But as we see in this passage in Luke 24, it's that we have the essential elements of the Gospel and nothing is left out. The whole message, we talk about hell, we talk about heaven, we talk about sin, we talk about righteousness, we talk about repentance, we talk about faith, we talk about the exclusivity of Christ, and we talk about the fact that if you don't trust in Christ there is no other hope. "I didn't shrink from declaring you the whole council of God. So pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers," talking now to the leaders in Ephesus, "to care for the Church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

It's so important. He loves these people and "I know," verse 29, "that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves," even within your seminaries and in your churches and in your denominations and in all the people who stand up with a Jesus t-shirt on, with a Bible in their hand, they are not going to spare the flock. Verse 30, "They will arise from among your own selves men speaking twisted things." There's some truth in there, but it's just twisted, it's redefined. And they will "draw away the disciples after them." And that's often the motive, not always the motive, but often the motive. Certainly, I could sell a lot more books, I could do a lot more "ministry," I could fill a lot more auditoriums with a lot more people if it were about me trying to have that simply by redefining this message. Don't ever talk about sin, don't talk about hell, don't talk about judgment, don't talk about the exclusivity of Christ. I could twist those things.

But Paul said, "I warned you," verse 31, "be alert therefore remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears," and that is that I know this message is going to be attacked. But I didn't leave out the essentials. Is repentance essential? Absolutely. Is proclaiming the message in his name to all nations, the need for that? Yes, it's essential, the resurrection of Christ is essential. The fact that Jesus had to die for sin, is it essential? It is essential. I think the truncation, the oversimplification, the reductionism of the Gospel into a Gospel pamphlet that we hand out to people, I think if you look at that, how does our culture and our generation, our evangelical leaders, how is it like to distill the Gospel? And usually it comes down to things like this: God will help you, he loves you, he'll give you a wonderful life, he'll give you the things you need, you won't be lonely, you'll have purpose. When the message that we're going to find throughout the book of Acts when we start this fall studying the book of Acts you're going to see the apostles were faithful to preach the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins because we have a problem that only Christ could solve.

Verse 48, Luke 24, back to our passage, "You're witnesses of these things." You've seen it, you've seen me do it, you've seen me preach it. You've seen the Scripture, you've seen it come to fruition before your eyes. You've watched me be crucified, you've watched me be resurrected. Now I'm sending you out. Go. Go do this thing. Go call people to repentance. "Behold, I'm sending you," he says, "I'm sending the promise of my Father upon you," which he's defined previously. It's the coming of a special relationship with the third person of the Godhead. God is going to empower you. "But stay in the city," stay here in Jerusalem, "until you're clothed with power from on high." You're going to have power.

And when I start talking about power, people love that, "Oh good. Give me some power." Like John Wimber said up in Pasadena, "I just want the power to do the Bible stuff," and the Bible stuff to him is the fancy, flashy stuff. "I want to do miracles." We've got a lot of people out there trying to rub their

hands together and say, "I want the power of the Holy Spirit so I can do things that will be like a magician at a magic show. It'll be awesome. Everyone will listen to me then talk about God." Interesting though, people who are often talking about those miracles are often giving us a message that is anemic and truncated and doesn't really have the whole council of God embedded in it. And I've got to think is that really what God is concerned about? What is he concerned about?

Let me take you to this passage, First Thessalonians Chapter 1. When you look at the Bible talking about the Holy Spirit, talking about empowering you, what is the purpose and the point of that? What is the sustaining, residual, ongoing work of the Spirit in this world? Jesus said it over and over and over again. "I'm going to send the Spirit into this world and the Spirit of God is going to convict people of sin, righteousness and judgment," to quote the Upper Room Discourse, the words of Christ. I'm going to send my Spirit and he's going to go with you, as he says in the Great Commission in Matthew 28, "I'm with you always even to the end of the age." I'm going to continue this entire epic of time until I come back again with the Spirit of God empowering you to do something. What? Magic shows? No.

First Thessalonians Chapter 1, look at verse 4. "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you." Right? We know you're part of this team, that you've been won over, that God is your father, you are his kids. How do we know that? Verse 5. "Because our Gospel came to you not only in word," we did share those words of repentance and death and resurrection of Christ, "but also in power and in the Holy Spirit." Here's the thing that the Spirit of God does. He brings this, this is the best phrase that will help you understand what it means for you to be empowered or clothed with power from on high. Here it comes. Ready? "With full conviction." We share the message, and I know that God was involved because when I shared it with you, the world rejects it, they think it's foolish, it doesn't make any sense to them, but with you it convicted you, it brought full conviction to your heart.

Look across the page or scroll down to Chapter 2 verse 13. Here it explains it further. It says we can't get over it, we're constantly thanking God for this. This is First Thessalonians 2:13. "We always thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God," we're back to that concept in First Thessalonians 1:4, First Thessalonians 1:5. The word came to you. He said, "You accepted it, it's a great word, you embraced it, "not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God." Not just something you learn in some seminar, here it comes, "which is at work in you believers." It changes you.

Number three, you need to "Trust in God's Power to Save." You need to trust in God's power to save. Trust in God's power to save. That's the power we need and the power that he grants is not a bunch of people who do magic tricks, which by the way, there was some of that going on in the early apostles, as it says Second Corinthians 12:12. The idea was clearly there would be an expression of God's power among the apostles to affirm the message, as Hebrews Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4 says, and that's true. But the main point of the ongoing work of the Spirit, even to the end of the age, is that when we share the message of the Gospel with co-workers and neighbors, they're not repulsed by it. As a matter of fact, they're convicted by it and they embrace it, and then it starts to do work in their lives.

That's the power that we have that goes beyond the apostles. It's the Spirit working in us so that when we bring his word it works, it changes lives. It says in verse 45 of our passage that he opened their minds to understand the Scripture. That is going to be the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our generation. You've got people in your lives right now who probably don't have any interest, you think, in spiritual things, but you are going to be faithful to bring the message that is biblical, you're going to



not leave out the essentials, and you going to have a conversation and, at some point, you going to have someone you did not expect, someone like Saul of Tarsus, that they become like Paul the Apostle, who is going to be radically transformed and you're going to stand back and say, "I shared that message with a lot of people and it did nothing, but it did something powerful here."

Jesus shared the story of the four soils and he talked about that seed and he talked about the seed going into those four soils and all of them had different responses. But it wasn't because the seed was different, the seed was exactly the same.

I've got a hand grenade on the bookshelf in my office. It's a pineapple grenade. If you know your military history it was used in Vietnam and back to World War II. It's kind of got those little knobs on it. It's green. Got a pin in the top. It doesn't work, by the way. I've wanted it to work several times in my ministry but it doesn't work. It's called the dummy grenade. It's a training tool. And I happen to come to, I don't know, somehow got it and sits on my shelf. It's an interesting conversational piece but it doesn't work. It's got a lot of pieces that are exactly the same as any Mk 2 grenade, that's what they're called, these pineapple grenades, but it doesn't have the essential ingredient. Right? There's something in it that should be explosive and it's not there. It's drilled out on the bottom and there's no explosive in it. So it is not... It's just a metal thing that just sits there looking like a grenade and it's not a grenade.

If it were a real grenade, though, it wouldn't matter who tossed that grenade between your shoes. It wouldn't matter. A 7-year-old could do it, a 70-year-old could do it, or, I don't know, the pitcher for the Angels could do. It really wouldn't matter who threw it as long as they threw one that worked. If they threw a grenade that worked it would be explosive. The thing that is odd for us is why doesn't it explode in everybody's life and the Bible says because God has to work on the other side of the street by getting that person ready. And if that person is ready and you share the right message and you don't define it by your culture, you don't find it by your whims, you don't define it by your imagination, you define it biblically and you share the whole message, that is going to explode in that person's life. It will be at work and their lives for the rest of their life. They will bear fruit, some 30, some 60, some 100-fold. Their lives will be changed, but you just got to throw the grenade.

I've got another grenade on my bookshelf, several of them, several copies of them, and it is a live one and it does work. It's not missing any of the explosive ingredients. And again, it doesn't matter who goes out this week in South Orange County to share it, it doesn't matter. It can be a 16-year-old who just came back from camp who's excited about sharing the message of repentance and faith and Heaven and Hell and judgment and forgiveness. It doesn't matter if it's the sharpest, most successful businessman in Orange County, or the most eloquent housewife, or whatever. It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter who you are. You share that message and God is at work in the people that you give that to, it will change their lives. You have to trust in God's power to save. I'm all into apologetics, I'm all into being articulate about the Gospel, but really, when it comes down to it, it's you not leaving out the elements and you being biblically defined and you explaining things biblically and you are going to make an explosive impact on your culture.

"Stay in the city until you've been clothed with power from on high." I guess I'd be remiss right here to make anyone think about sharing the Gospel if, in fact, the Gospel hasn't exploded in your life. Has it? Are you sure? Are you sure? The problem with the four soils illustration, at least from my perspective as a pastor, is it's easy to tell the difference between the first soil and the fourth soil. You've got the soil that nothing happens in, and the fourth soil where everything happens in. The problem is there are two soils in between. They're a little confusing. Because they both look like there's something going



on there but it doesn't last very long. It's all surface. It doesn't go deep. It really doesn't explode really in the heart, it just explodes in a few words or a few testimonies or a few actions or maybe there's a water baptism or there's, you know, a testimonial at a camp, but it doesn't change the person's life.

You and I have been handed the baton to take the message of the Gospel to our generation. But I want to make sure you take at least a minute here this morning to think am I really gripped by that message, has it been at work in my life? Trusting God's power to save, I guess the first thing you need to trust in is that he can save you, change you. Maybe you've grown up in a church with an anemic Gospel, a truncated Gospel, a reductionistic Gospel where you really only got facts about the "here and now" and not the "then and there." Facts about God's love but not God's justice. Facts about your fulfillment and not God's holiness. Time for you to relook at this thing and to say, "Yeah, I've got to make sure I'm saved." And if you are then great. Let's move on from this. Let's take the next step and recognize that if we follow him we'll become fishers of men. We saw that theme continue throughout the Gospels. It ended in John 21 with, "Hey, Peter get out there. Shepherd my sheep." You got people out there to effect and to impact for Christ. It's a powerful word. It's a word that can change people's lives.

I started this illustration about that cylinder in Paris. I don't know, maybe there are one or two this weekend will be so up on weights and measures they'll know that that standard there in Paris is only good for a couple more months. It's been the standard for so long, so many years, that one cylinder, that one cylinder is going to be a non-issue May 20th. On May 20th, and it'll be the last unit of measure that is not in some physical, natural constant. It's still a little cylinder that everything else is measured by. Weight. Weight is going to be shifted in a very complicated process of physics so that at any nerd in any laboratory in any country around the world can figure out what a kilogram is. And then it'll be obsolete. And the reason they're going to make it obsolete, is they want everyone to have access to that. Of course, it'll be the nerds in DC in our country that will do it. But, it won't be reliant on shipping a dummy kilogram on a plane to Paris and making sure we know how much stuff weighs.

And by the way, every time they came back to double check that those standards were right, we would always find they were off a little bit. All kinds of things affected the weight, down to very small increments, but we want to make sure we're right. Now there'll be a physical standard starting on May 20th of this year.

I love the fact that we don't just have some kind of imperfect reflection of the truth that we're trying to proclaim to our generation. You have in your lap a propositional book, a book that is inerrant, a book that is God-breathed. A book that God has put the message of what it takes to be right with him forever. He's put it there in clear, propositional, inerrant, infallible sentences and paragraphs. It's great that any nerd anywhere in the world can consult the Word of God and figure out what is true and what's not. Does that take some submissiveness, some faith? Yes. Not faith that we don't know that it's true but a kind of confidence and trust that God is the king and can make the rules.

I love that verse I quoted at the beginning, Proverbs 16:11. It goes far beyond the marketplace, "A just balance and scales are the Lord's; all the weights in the bag are his work." God cares about calibrating our message and the good news is you're never going to calibrate what you say to your neighbors, friends and co-workers if you don't spend time in the Word. You need to read it, you need to meditate on it, you need to study it, you need to memorize it. It's got to be part of your life. If I do nothing in this sermon but motivate you, some catalytic way to get back to the Scriptures again and again and again, so that when you speak about God, you're not speaking about some aspect of God and not giving the full picture of God. When you speak about people, you're not getting one aspect about people, you are giving the full biblical picture of people, then this is a good sermon, because it will



allow you to get back into the Word again. You're spending 10 minutes in it? Then spend 20. If you're spending an hour in it then push for 2. Spend time in the book. Make sure you know the message we're giving to this generation.

As Paul looked at it in Timothy's life, he said in First Timothy 6, guard it, "Guard this deposit that was entrusted to you." He goes on to say in the next book, "What I've given you in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men." You have a faithful deposit given to you. And he goes on to say there's a lot of "irreverent babble" out there. There are lots of contradictions and what's falsely called knowledge. Stop with all this new stuff. Get back to the truth of God's Word.

It's a powerful message. Romans 1:16 says we shouldn't be ashamed of it because it's a powerful grenade, it is God's truth that transforms lives. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." There are some people in this room who should probably be missionaries in other places. I get that, but let's start here. Let's start at the baseball field, let's start at the workplace, let's start in our neighborhoods. Let's share the message of the Gospel. If you get rejected, just know, there's nothing lacking in the potency of the message, that God hasn't yet gotten involved with the receptor, that person you're sharing with. But he will. Keep at it. Keep your evangelism biblical, don't leave out the essentials, and trust in God's power to save. He will and he'll do it through you and he'll do it through me.

Let's pray. God, help us please to be much more confident in the power of your Word. As Jeremiah 23 says, a lot of people speaking what they think in their own minds, but, "What does straw have in common with wheat?" God, as you said, "Is my Word not like fire, declares Lord, is not my word like a hammer that breaks rocks into pieces?" God, we just need to be more biblical. The reason we're Compass Bible Church, God, we've done this for your honor because your Word is central and it should be the dominant feature of our lives and our thinking. Make us so saturated in our minds with your truth in your Word that when we talk about you with other people, which I pray you would just loosen our lips to talk about you more often, we would say things that are thoroughly biblical, and be very careful to represent you clearly and well as ambassadors, that's our job. We wouldn't be a good ambassador if we're not clear about your message. So focus us on that this week and let us be more bold and more entrenched and focused on your truth. Thanks God for this reminder from your Word as we go out to our generation to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

In Jesus name. Amen.