



## **The Royal Task-Part 5**

Unfazed by Sovereign Challenges

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Those are some great testimonies. Makes for a great morning, a great weekend. Makes me think that it's a privilege to be part of a great church and I really want to be a part of a great church. I'd like to pastor a great church. I bet you'd like to go to a great church. I know that Jesus gave report cards basically to the churches there in Revelation 2 and 3 for Smyrna and Philadelphia in particular in Chapters 2 and 3. I mean he gave them, really, just unmitigated praise for what they were doing and I'd just love to be a church like that. But I know to be a church like that you're going to have to do things that are hard. I mean, really true greatness for a church or a person is going to come down to how they respond when things are difficult. What they're going to do when doing the right thing is a challenge, when there's opposition, when there are reasons to not keep the course. So that is the real challenge that we have and Jesus said it's easy to do the easy things. No one gets praise for doing the easy things and non-Christians are great at doing whatever they feel like doing. But God is asking us to do the hard things. And undoubtedly as we've been studying Acts here for week number five now, we recognize and I admit we're going into territory that's demanding hard things of us. I mean for many of us to talk to other people about our Christianity is one of the hardest things we can do. And I know it's going to be hard particularly when I realize the opposition that we're going to encounter and the difficulties and the challenges and the setbacks that we will feel like we're in the middle of in our own lives personally because of our commitment to share the gospel. And yet that is where we need to be. We need to be committed to not giving up, to not backing down. I mean, really, that's what it comes down to in our lives as Christians. If we're going to rise up and do what God asks us to do, to work through those difficulties, then we don't even get through the first half of Acts Chapter 1 until we encounter a kind of difficulty that maybe you haven't paused long enough to think about, is probably one of those profound difficulties of all. That is when you have among the team of people who you think are going to be pulling shoulder-to-shoulder with you, people who you feel like have become part of the group that is going to reach the world with the gospel, and this isn't just someone rejecting the gospel in your life at work or in your family, this is someone who has shown evident signs, at least it seems to be, that he's a trustworthy co-laborer in helping you be who you need to be as a fisher of men, as a representative of Christ, as an ambassador in this world and then to have them defect, to have him turn his back, to be an apostate, to be a betrayer. And that's really what we're dealing with in Acts Chapter 1 verse 15 where Peter stands up after being commissioned with the other ten apostles, we've got eleven apostles here who are going to be faithful to the work and they say but we've lost one. What do we do about Judas? And Peter doesn't spend much time saying, well here's, you know, what we ought to do. We ought to sit here and mourn his loss. Peter seems so unfazed by this challenge in part because he sees it as God's divine plan. I want you to look at that and I hope that this quick study of Acts Chapter 1 verses 15 through 20 can be the kind of encouragement in your life that it has been in mine, which is to echo and reflect the determination, the indomitable spirit of a group of people who are ready to say we're going to reach our community, we're going to reach our generation, we're not going to be afraid, we're not going to back down, we're not going to quit when the going gets



tough. Even if it means the kind of personal betrayal that Judas foisted, not just on Christ, but on the whole of the apostolic team.

So take a look at this passage with me as Peter stands up in a group of 120, it says here. Imagine who's there? Probably got Martha and Mary and Lazarus from Bethany, not to mention we've already been told, Mary the mother of Christ is there. You've got Jesus' half-brothers there. You probably have people like Nicodemus there who ended up in the resurrection story. You certainly have Joseph of Arimathea I imagine is there. You have so many people who have been reached with the gospel who are now going to be empowered in Chapter 2 to take the gospel elsewhere and yet we have a little housekeeping matter we have to deal with Peter says. We got one of the twelve who's been a betrayer. We've got to deal with that. We're going to cover what they do about that in verses 21 and following next time. But today let's look at the first few verses here and see if we can't derive some strength from these passages.

Here, look at verse 15 when it says, "In those days Peter stood up among the brothers." Now we have two parenthetical sections in this passage. The first one is Luke stops and says this isn't just the eleven, this is up to 120 people. This is a rough number, an estimate, about 120 people who are there in this Upper Room. And he says to them, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled," verse 16, "which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David," which, by the way, that's a great way to talk about Scripture. That's the biblical way to talk about Scripture. That's the way Jesus talked about Scripture. This is not man's best thoughts about God. These are God's thoughts utilizing human instruments. The Holy Spirit had something to say to people and he used David in this case in the Psalms to say those things. I mean, just look at how that's worded. "The Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David." And look, he's making some applications here, specifically to Psalm 69 and Psalm 109, by saying, it all applies to Judas, "concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus," verse 17, "for he was numbered," here's the painful part, "among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." I mean it just sends a chill up your spine if you think about who he was and he was one of us. He was part of us. He was on a pastoral team, he was on the staff. He was one of the leaders when he was with us, but he became a betrayer. Now we have the second parenthetical section in verses 18 and 19 where Luke now commentates under God's inspiration, obviously, during the work of the Spirit in writing this book, he says, well let's talk about Judas. "Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness." How much did he get paid for this? Do you remember? Thirty pieces of silver, described there in Zechariah Chapter 11. You want to talk about biblical prophecy, by the way, speaking about what Judas did. And he said he fell headlong, "falling headlong he burst open," I hope you haven't had breakfast just before you came in here, "in the middle and his bowels gushed out." Sorry. That's gross. "And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was known in their own language *Alkeldama*. *Alkeldama* is Aramaic for Field of Blood," which is what Matthew 27 told us it was called. And then he picks up Peter's speech. He says, as he's talking about Scripture being fulfilled, "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, 'May his camp become desolate, and there'll be no one to dwell in it.'" Well there's a picture of God taking someone out. Right? Not coming home to Mrs. Judas at night. This guy is gone now. He's dead. But then he quotes Psalm 109 and he says but we're not going to leave it empty because Jesus kept talking about 12 apostles sitting on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel to quote Matthew 19. So we can't have 11 here, we need 12. And so he's going to deal with



that beginning in verse 21. But he says, in quoting Psalm 109, "let another take his office." And that's what leads them then to try and figure out who's going to be number 12.

But let's just deal with that. Here he is, very confidently, I put it this way in the subtitle, he seems unfazed by the challenge of having a betrayer among them and an open slot among the leaders of this band of disciples. And he's just plowing on ahead and everyone's plowing with him. They're undeterred and they don't let their foot off the gas pedal. They're moving toward the mission of being God's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth, and Judas isn't going to get in the way. And I love that. I love that in part because he starts in verse 16 by saying "Scripture had to be fulfilled" and he stood up and said it like, "No big deal." Oh it's painful. It's a painful deal. It's a setback humanly speaking. But you know what? Right on God's schedule. Exactly what God said would happen. Matter of fact, look across the page. The whole crucifixion in Acts Chapter 2 as Peter preaches there after the Spirit comes upon the Church, he then says this. Drop down to verse 22. He says in Acts 2:22, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, the man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know, this Jesus, delivered up," now underline this, "according to the definite plan and the foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed him by the hands of lawless men." It's all part of God's plan, including the betrayal, "he was delivered up." Well, how was he delivered up? Through the hand of a betrayer who leaned over and kissed him in the Garden and said, "This is the guy," so that the chief priests and the scribes can come and arrest him. That is all part of God's, here are the words, "definite plan" as it says in our passage, "Scripture had to be fulfilled." We'd like to think that God plans out all the good stuff and he doesn't plan out all the bad stuff. We like to think that all the good testimonies that we hear of people that hang in there long term, well that's God's plan. But, you know, these other ones, well, that's not God's plan. It's not God's desire and I'll grant you that. It's not what God wants if you're talking about what he desires to have happen. Right? His revealed will is this is what I'd like to see happen: people coming to repentance and faith, being genuine and sincere, and going the duration. That's his revealed will, that's his command to the world. But his secret will, we often call it, his decretive will, the sovereign will of God, is as oftentimes, we're going to have, as Jesus even knew, as he said when he picked these disciples. He picked them after praying all night on the mountain, he comes down, he assigns the Twelve Apostles and then later he says, "Listen, you didn't choose me, I chose you." He said, "And even so one of you is a devil." In other words, this is all part of the plan. "One of you is an adversary, one of you is a slanderer, one of you is against me and I know that." It's not a surprise.

Now we talk a lot about why God would plan for Christ to have one betrayer in his top tier group of people that he was going to entrust the gospel with. Well, I would say in part, it's because you and I are going to have that experience for the entirety of our Christian lives. You're going to have people who are going to sit right next to you after you've worked in their life to say, "Hey, come join us. Hey, I've caught you now in the net of God's gospel, at least it looks like it, I need you now to go with me and be fishers of men." There can be people in your Bible Study or small group. They're going to be who you take your Partners with and you're going to say, "This is it. We got another person who's serious about seeing Christ's kingdom hastened by being a witness for Christ in our generation." And then they're going to bail. You're going to be demoralized and



frustrated and you're tempted to be a fretting Christian who is cynical now and all the passion for evangelism just kind of drains out of you.

Number one on your outline, you need to "Expect Sovereign Setbacks." Expect that. You're not going to get from here to the kingdom without Judases in your life. It's going to happen. And it's going to happen and you ought to be ready for it just like a soldier who's going into war knowing that while we expect and hope that everyone wearing our uniform is going to be faithful to the commander there are going to be defectors. From Benedict Arnold to Bowe Bergdahl. You're going to have betrayers. You're going to have people who look like they're fighting on our side and then they're not.

My daughter and I were sharing the gospel about a month ago with this gal. Everything seemed great, commitment to Christ. She literally, before my daughter and I, took her crack pipe and threw it in the trash and walked away from a life of drugs and all the things she was involved in and wanted to serve Christ, came to church for two weeks and then said, "Nope. Not going to do it." Heartbreaking. That's heartbreaking.

Not to mention some that I've been shoulder-to-shoulder with in ministry for years. People who have been, people who I felt have been loyal to the gospel and then to rise up, even as late as this month, and say, you know what, I'm done. I kind of watch Christian News. You've got a classmate of mine back from Moody in Chicago. Right? All about the Bible, all about the truth. Now he's one of the top booked guests to be on talk shows to preach against Christianity. Right? That's what he's doing now. Or lately, you got guys like Josh Harris, everyone loved reading his books, everybody was all about what he was saying. He was at all the top conferences. In our little circle of Christianity, he was a big name and now he comes out and says "Nah, I'm not into it anymore." Well that was hard, makes you a cynic. It can drain all the passion of evangelism out of your heart. You start to not trust anyone. That did not happen to the disciples because they said this, "I know Scripture had to be fulfilled." Now, of course, Scripture had to be fulfilled because God had Judas in view even in the Old Testament and he certainly got your defectors in view. But you need to realize this. Though you can't point to a passage and say, "Oh, God had this in mind here." Trust me, every defector in your life he knew exactly what was going to happen. He figures this all out. He decrees it all. It's all within his sovereign plan. That may be hard for us to compute in our minds how a sovereign plan can still leave people guilty for being lawless people and crucifying Christ, or in this case, turning their back as apostates on Christ. But I know this: none of it is surprising to God and none of it fazes him and none of it should faze us. We ought to be people who recognize, you know what? Moving on. Defectors? Yeah, they're going to happen. It's going to be a reality for us. Expect sovereign setbacks. You're going to have your Judases, your Josh Harrises, your Bart Ehrmans, you're going to have betrayers because Jesus said it in the parable of the soils. One of the things he says in that same chapter in Matthew Chapter 13 is the parable of the wheat and the weeds. It used to be called the wheat and the tares in the old translations, where you're going to have the wheat being planted and then among the wheat you're going to have weeds. And here are all the concerned people. "Wow. How can there be weeds in this field?" And the response is, well, as the text says, "an enemy has done this." And that's true, an enemy has done this. And they say, "well, let's just try and rip them out." Well, you don't always know. And so the master says, the owner of the fields says, "Nope. Let it grow up. I'll sort it out in time.

I'll figure this out. You just keep sharing, keep trusting, keep investing. Don't worry." As a matter of fact, you're going to have to endure it, even when he gets really personal for you. And how personal is this, verse 17, "he was numbered among us." They shared the gospel together. I mean, this is more than rejection and you're going to get that. You come this afternoon, Pastor Hayden trains us, go out door-to-door to share the gospel, you have a few doors slammed in your face. Even if you're the nicest person you can be, you're going to feel that rejection. But how much more rejection will you feel if you're dealing with the Benedict Arnold, the Bowe Bergdahl of the spiritual reality. They join us for a while. Well that's what Jesus said. You got two soils, the bookends of the soils. You've got the soil that rejects the gospel, you got the soil that embraces the gospel and bears fruit for the rest of their lives. And then the problem is you've got these two soils in the middle. The soils where the cares of the world eventually show the true nature of that seed and then you've got the one in which just hard times come and they say, "I'm out of here." When persecution arises because of the word they fall, "I'm done." Sometimes that's a slow process as we've seen in many people who have been in the news headlines lately in our Christian circles who have bailed out. But when it feels like complete and utter betrayal and rejection you need to learn to endure it.

Number two on your outline. Would you jot that down? I mean, when you say they were among us and then they're not, can you just say I'm going to endure it. I'm going to choose ahead of time, that not only that I know this is a sovereign plan of God and that none of this fazes God, I'm going to say, I'm going to endure it the way that Peter endured it, which is just plowing. It's OK. I'm going to move forward. Do I like it? I don't like it, I don't like it any more than reading Luke's commentary about Judas' guts gushing out. That's awful. That's gross.

Which, by the way, I should sidebar this for a minute. Matter of fact, since I have a minute or two, let me take you to Matthew 27 because someone's going to say to you the Bible's full of contradictions and this is one they love to point to. And I want you to be able to know that if you give this two minutes thought, this is not a contradiction at all. There's nothing here to be concerned about in terms of contradiction. But they're going to open up Acts Chapter 1 and they're going to look at verses 18 and 19 and they're going to open up Matthew Chapter 27 and they're going to go, "da-da-da!, there you go. There's your problem, contradiction. The Bible's full of errors, that's why I can't trust it."

Well, look at Matthew 27. As long as we're talking about this sidebar for a minute, verse 5. "Judas goes and he throws down the pieces of silver," this is Matthew 27:5, "into the temple." Do you see that? "And then he departed and he went and he hanged himself." What does that do to you? That's not a trick question, interactive 11:00 crowd (audience laughter). It kills you. Right? Unless you're really bad at it, that just really easily kills you. Now it's printed on your worksheet there or if you've got a split window open on your iPad look at Acts Chapter 1. It says here he's falls headlong, burst open in the middle and his bowels gush out. And people say, well then that's how he died. Well let me ask you this question. Does this text say that's how he died? Look at verse 18. Matter of fact, I dare you to try to trip and fall and have your guts burst out and die. You don't see that very often. As a matter of fact, you don't really see that at all unless you're falling on a razor-sharp rock. I mean this is a crazy statement if you think this is the way he died. This is not the way Judas died. Judas did not die by falling headlong on to whatever it was, it doesn't



even say, and his bowels gushing out. Do I believe his bowels gushed out? I do. I do believe that his bowels gushed out. But I believe his bowels gushed out after he died. As gross as this is and again I didn't write it, I'm just trying to comment on it here, as long as we've already lost our appetite, when do your bowels gush out? Not when you fall down. As a matter of fact, you read news story after news story of people falling even on sharp objects and rarely do their guts fall out. You could jump from a 10-story building. God has created your nice elastic body with its rib cage to where most of your guts are going to stay right where they belong. You're going to be dead. Right? Yes, some blood comes out of your ears but you're not going to have your guts fall out. That's really hard for you to do. People say well maybe he tried to hang himself and then the branch broke and then he fell. You'd have to have a razor-sharp rocks, you'd be really bad at tying a rope onto the right branch, which could be, I suppose, and maybe you did it way up high. And so they start to say, well maybe it's over a big cliff. Nonsense. You know what happens when you die? Again, this is a wonderful sermon so far here (audience laughter). You start to decompose. Matter of fact, you compost on the inside of your gut. That's what happens. As a matter of fact, and I don't suggest you look it up, certainly not before lunch. Matter of fact, let me do the research, I've already done it and I'll just report to you, you can look at people who have hung out in the sun. It does not take long for those bodies to become bloated. For them to have distended stomachs. To have all of this gas build up inside their corpse. It doesn't take very long. Now what does it take to bust open? Not much, it's like a balloon. Right? Given the right circumstances as that body, which everybody does, it starts to compost on the inside, you've got a bloated corpse that if you were to cut that down, it wouldn't take that much, as matter of fact, you wouldn't have to jump from a 10-story building to have that thing fall and to bust open. That would be a gross, gross thing, but it doesn't say that's how he died. It says that's what happened to his body. Right? "He fell headlong..." Right? "Falling headlong," participle, "he burst open in the middle his bowels gushed out." Let me propose to you something that I think makes a lot of sense, a lot more sense than thinking someone tripped in his guts blew up. What happened was he hung himself, that's how people die. They die pretty consistently that way. It's an easy way to do it. I don't suggest you do it. Matter of fact, I plead with you not to do it. But I'm saying that's a pretty simple way for you to kill yourself. After that your body becomes a bloated corpse as gross as it is to repeat that and I'm sorry for doing that. But I believe that's what happened to his corpse and was one of the reasons that you have this having such a gloomy, disparaging, awful, gross kind of cloud of poetic justice at the end of his life. His blood and his guts spilled out on this field that was purchased with 30 pieces of silver.

Now the question is, as long as you have Matthew 27 open, who purchased the field? Because look at the text. If you got Matthew 27, it says in verse 7, "So they," there's a personal pronoun and it goes back up to what? Verse 6, the chief priests taking the silver. They said, "It's not lawful to put them in the treasury." We don't want it. We don't want this money, "it's blood money." So they took counsel and they brought with them the potter's field. With what? With the 30 pieces of silver, "as a burial place for strangers," and so it became on the south end, outside the Old City walls where the Valley of Kidron comes and joins with the Southern Valley. Actually, it was a place that was referred to in Jeremiah where the potters did their work in the potter's field. It was also a place that they would harvest clay out of the soil for the pots. Matter of fact, it was discussed in Zechariah as well. This place was significant and it became, even as archaeologists have uncovered a place where tons of bodies were actually buried, and so it had this name, the

Field of Blood, which you see in verse 8 of our passage in Matthew 27. You certainly see it in our passage here, but who bought it? Because in our passage it says, look at it, "A man," verse 18, "acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness." Now who bought the field? Well, even the word I'm using, verse 7, is very clear that the chief priest bought the field. They bought it. It also makes it clear in verse 6 they didn't want the money. They didn't want the money in their treasury. This is blood money. This was money that was used to have someone killed. So we don't want it. Whose money was it? Well, it's Judas' money. Well, the passage in Acts Chapter 1 verse 18 says now "this man acquired a field." My daughter recently got her license and bought a car. She bought a car because she'd been saving her whole childhood for it, so she got a used car. Well, I say she bought a car but she didn't buy the car, I bought the car, but it was her money, so really she bought the car. So when she tells someone she bought the car, she bought the car. Right? She acquired the car, I guess, if you want to get technical with it, I bought the car but it's in her name, I put it in her name and I just did the transaction. I did the transaction but I did this: it's not my money, it's her money. Guess what? We both say we bought the car, but in reality, if I'm going to be specific, I might say you acquired the car because it was your money and it's in your name, but I'm the one who did the transaction and bought it. Which is exactly what you have. You have two different verbs here. One is "acquired the field," verse 18, and everyone should make sure, it's not the priest buying the field, "it ain't our money, and it's Judas' field." And then you have the one who "purchased it" and that was the chief priest. No contradiction here. Very important for us to see that. How did Judas die? He died by hanging himself. What happened to his corpse? It split open. Who bought the field? The chief priest bought it. Who acquired it? It was acquired and certainly put in the name of Judas because Judas was the one who they didn't want anything to do with that money or with him and so they were like it's his field. And that's what we have in reconciling and harmonizing those two passages, which is not hard at all if you just give it a little bit of thought and look honestly. If you're looking for criticism of the Bible, I guess you're going to use that passage, but there are no problems here in this text. What's the problem is, is what a pain for rejection it is to have this person who was one of your hailed chief leaders of the apostolic gang preaching the gospel who now has just got a terrible, gross, awful story of him dying in a field as a betrayer and a deserter of Christ. Now, that's terrible and it hurts. And yet you need to learn to power through that.

And guess what. The author of this book, Luke, is going to feel that in a very profound way because in 64 A.D. when Paul writes his last book after his second imprisonment, so Luke has already written this book because it ends when he's in prison the first time in Rome, guess what Paul keeps writing to his friends, like in Colossae and then Philemon, he keeps saying this: "Hey, Luke the beloved physician, sends you greetings and so does Demas. He keeps saying, "Hey, Luke and Demas send greetings." So guess who's really tight? Luke and Demas. In Second Timothy Chapter 4, the last book that Paul writes, he says this about Demas and that's going to come as a pain and certainly a real big pain of rejection for Luke. He didn't know it yet when he writes this but he's going to have his own Judas, his own betrayer, his own deserter, his buddy and ministry partner Demas, to have Paul say this about him eventually, "Demas, who loves this present world, has deserted me." It's just the reality. Matter of fact, in that passage and you ought to read it before your small groups this week, Second Timothy Chapter 4. He's got a lot of people who opposed him and have deserted him. Some who stood with him have deserted him and at one point he says everyone's deserted me. And you know what? It never cools his evangelistic

passion. He continues to move forward. And he gets up and he says in this meeting in verse 20, hey you know what? "It's written in the psalms," it's going to happen. God's going to destroy those enemies of his. He's going to sometimes lay them out and pull the weeds up before the end of the time of judgment before God. It's going to happen. And then he quotes Psalm 109 verse 8 and says you know what? "Someone else should take his office," particularly something like this that's so important. We got 12 apostles, 12 tribes. We need a 12th, and so we're just moving forward. He doesn't fret about it, he just keeps about the work and in your life you need to keep about the work. We don't have an apostle to pick but we have evangelism to do in our generation. I'm going to say to you exactly what I see in this text which is number three, you need to... Did I not say number 2 yet? "Endure painful rejection." Number three. Shortest point of all, number two. Now number three. "Don't Fret. Keep evangelizing." You need to endure that painful rejection and then you need to get up... I love it. You see this throughout the Bible. I remember Joshua is grieving on his face before God because someone, Achan, had stolen some stuff that they weren't supposed to take from Jericho and as he's weeping and crying over the loss, you got a traitor in your midst, God comes and says, "Hey, Josh, get off the ground, wipe your face, stand up, move forward. Identify the problem and move forward." I love that. And we need to do the same thing. Shake it off, man. Don't be fazed. You get a door slammed in your face, that's one level of rejection. You got a deserter in your midst. Hey, shake it off. It's not a surprise to God. It's part of his big plans. He's going to work everything out for good. Trust him. Move forward. And don't let it cool your passion for evangelism. Keep evangelizing. Paul did certainly and we should too.

I was teaching the gals in our Navigating Motherhood program on Friday. I shared with them from Second Corinthians Chapter... Well, the whole book, we kind of reference several things in it. But I was trying to encourage them of Paul living out in Second Corinthians what he ended First Corinthians with. In First Corinthians 15:58 he says this: he says you ought to "always be abounding in the work of the Lord." Right? Just keep going, be "immovable, steadfast, always abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain." Now if anyone had reason to say, you know what, a lot of my labor is in vain it would be Paul because he had his Demases, he had the people that had turned against him, that was Alexander the coppersmith. He had all these people who would not stand and be faithful. Not only did he have rejection, but he had people who really broke his heart. But he says this: "I'm not going to stop. My labor is not in vain. I'm going to move forward. I'm going to keep going." And in Second Corinthians he keeps talking about that. He celebrates victories when people repent. He celebrates it. But he could say like a lot of you say, "Well, I'm not sure, you know, you never know what's going to happen." You're right, you don't know what's going to happen. You could have a Bart Ehrman or a Josh Harris on your hands, you don't know. But you know what? Celebrate every victory. You've got to move forward. You're going to have to believe people's testimonies. Right? You're going to have to move forward with a hope and an optimistic kind of resolve that you're going to keep doing this work. You're not going to let this dissuade you. In Second Corinthians he says it over and over again. And even though he confesses to indignation in Chapter 11, he says this: "Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?" Right? But here's what I would like to say. Get over your indignation as quickly as you can. Matter of fact, move on to do what Peter and the rest of the apostles did here. And I think a lot of that indignation needs to shift rather quickly and I'll try to do this on the discussion questions on the back of your worksheet. There are certain perspectives you need to have that will move you from anger toward all of this, even from a slammed door in





your face this afternoon, move from anger as soon as you can, the indignation of that, to things like compassion and pity. I mean you ought to feel bad for them. Paul has great anguish in his heart for the people who are lost, to quote Romans Chapter 9 verse 2. Right? He hurts. Jeremiah says this: be appalled. You ought to be desolate, you ought to feel bad. Why? Because people have rejected the Spring of Living Water, God himself, and have dug for themselves cisterns that don't hold any water. When you see people either defecting, deserting or slamming the door in your face, or people at work stiff-arming you when you try to talk about the gospel, listen, don't fret.

And that's a great passage by the way. I can't say don't fret without thinking of Psalm 37. Psalm 37, don't fret, don't fret, "don't fret; it only leads to evil." Don't fret. Refrain from anger. Don't fret. "Do not fret because of evildoers." Just don't fret! Fretting does nothing good. You don't see the apostles in Acts Chapter 1 licking their wounds and it's awful and isn't it terrible. Let's have a moment of silence for Judas. Great. "Josh, you to bail out? Bart you a bailout?" Whatever. Right? "I feel bad for you. You're rejecting the only hope that you have, to go get patted on the back by the world? You want that? You want to slam the door?" Even like Paul and Barnabas said, listen, you count yourself unworthy of eternal life? Then we're moving on. I'm going to move on to the next guy. And so should you. Not with a dispassionate heart. We care about the lost and we care about those who reject the gospel. But I'm not going to spend my time being indignant for too long. That may be a godly reaction, indignation. But let's get to the place where Paul was for moving from indignant about those who fall to being in anguish, really, hurt, compassionate, pity. The rejection of the truth. "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

I quoted Second Timothy Chapter 4 and I hope you spend some time in that passage before your small groups. But when he says, "Listen, no one came to stand by me in my first defense. They all deserted me." He says this: "But the Lord stood by me so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it." Talk about not letting off the gas pedal, when someone rejects the gospel and deserts, you press it down harder. That's going to motivate, it's going to push me forward, I'm going to do the work. There are a lot of misconceptions about the Christian life is all about. There really is. A lot of people even look at words like gentleness in the Scripture. A Christian is supposed to be characterized by gentleness, love, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness.

That expression of God's work in our hearts. If you don't think that there's tenacity embedded in that word then you haven't studied the word. The word is about being unfazed when things are hard. True greatness in your Christian life, true greatness in our church, is going to be when we are not fazed. We do not back down. Gentleness is that internal resolve. To quote one of the great linguists of ancient Greek, he says this is a humble, patient, steadfastness. That's what the word gentleness is all about. To be able to submit to disgrace and maltreatment. Trusting in God in spite of it all. Carrying on. It's that poster that was all the rage for a little while at least, Keep Calm and Carry On. Remember that? I don't know if you know that came from the essence of the sentiment that was shared by Winston Churchill in the midst of the war as it was ramping up. As he addressed the House of Commons, he gave a speech and he talked about the fact that, yeah we're going into some major conflict here. But he said this: you need to realize that there may be war out there but there's peace in our hearts. That's the concept of gentleness. We're okay. We're



okay even if we have people pressing hard against us. And not to over quote Churchill this morning, but in the one quote you may have thought of when it comes to not quitting, when Churchill stands up and says never give in. Never, never, never, never give in. And he goes back to address his old school, his alma mater, he says no matter how intense the adversary might be, no matter how crazy hard it might be, we know this: we are going to stay firm on conviction, to paraphrase Churchill. And we're not going to give up. We're not going to give in.

There are a lot of people who will try to share the gospel because of this series we're in. Because they'll respond to the royal task to say, "Well, if God wants me to open my mouth, I'll do it. I'll pray for those four people, I'll pray with three prayer partners and I'll pray for these five things. That's what I challenged you to do last week. And they might actually open their mouth but when it gets tough, when they see someone who immediately embraces the gospel and then rejects it, it's going to cool. That's the prediction unless you have that steadfast spirit.

I want you to be at peace in your own heart. These are sovereign setbacks when they happen. It may be painful but endure it. Never fret about this. You can feel bad about it, there can be sorrow, but keep ongoing.

To quote him precisely, Churchill said, "Our moral conviction alone affords us the ever-fresh resilience that renews the strength and energy of people in long and doubtful and dark days. Outside the storms of war may blow and lands may be lashed with the fury of its gales, but in our hearts," he did this on a Sunday morning, "this Sunday morning," he said, "let there be peace. Our hands may be active, but our consciences are at rest." I hope you get out there this week. Stand up for Christ. Speak up for the gospel. And never back down.

Let's pray. God, we hear great testimonies this morning from the baptismal tank. I hope that excites us all to get active in sharing the gospel. But even if we're rejected ten times this week, even if, like my daughter and I just experienced, you see someone confess Christ and two weeks later say, "No, not for me." God, I pray we would be unfazed. Let us be immovable, steadfast, always abounding in your work, knowing that our labor, ultimately, is not in vain. God, we know there are going to be setbacks. Just let us be unfazed by that. Let us be bold this week, clear and loving to those around us about the gospel.

In Jesus name. Amen.