



## **Pointing People to Christ-Part 6**

Unashamed of God's One Way

Pastor Mike Fabarez

I happened to hear this week an attorney speak of his law firm and his litigation track record. This is no average attorney, this was an attorney whose firm had represented several clients before the United States Supreme Court. He was boasting in this interview of the fact that he had not lost a single case in that context. That was impressive. I know that it's easy for us as armchair attorneys to hear the musings of some of the Supreme Court justices and think, yeah, you know, they're wrong and here's why. But if someone handed you a briefcase and a file folder and invited you up those 44 ascending steps through those eight columns of the portico and they slid open those six and a half-ton bronze doors and a guy in a suit escorted you down the middle aisle to that mahogany table and told you to lean forward into the microphone and there sat those nine robed justices in the Supreme Court building, and they said, "OK, you don't agree? Make your case."

That would be intimidating, to say the least. That would be an intimidating scene to try to defend yourself logically. I'm grateful that we have some well-trained, highly educated, super-intelligent guys in this case, Christian attorney who could stand and litigate truth and freedom because I wouldn't want to have my plumber or my waitress or my dentist, as smart and respectable as they are, arguing a case that I feel very passionate about that needs to be argued. I want the best and the brightest there representing what is right and what is true.

It's intimidating to think about that scene. There was a Supreme Court in the first-century that was equally as intimidating, if not more. There weren't nine robed justices, there were actually 70 of them. They sat in a semicircle in bleachers almost, ascending seats, they were stone seats. They met in the chamber of Hewn Stones that was in the shadow of the gigantic altar right outside of Herod's temple. They were called in Greek the Sanhedrin. That's the transliterated word. In our English Standard Version it's translated "the council." It was presided over by the reigning high priest. He was the 71st member of this Supreme Court of Israel. It was very intimidating. But of course, you remember the scene, I suppose, from Luke 22, where Jesus was called in before the Sanhedrin. He had to stand before the council and you think about how intimidating that must have been, and yet when you read the passage in Luke 22, you don't really feel a lot of that intimidation.

Matter of fact, you know who we're dealing with here. This is the one who can calm the seas, this is the one who can raise the dead, this is the creator of heaven and earth. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He stands before Caiaphas and Jesus made the human race. He is the creator of all things. You think, "OK, Jesus. Let him have it, go at it, speak." And almost in frustration as you read the text, as the prophets had so clearly seen in advance, "like a sheep is silent before its shearers, so he did not open his mouth." Well, he had a couple of one-word answers, but, I mean, we wanted him to unleash the logic that he was demonstrating as God. I mean, we wanted him just to turn those leaders into a pretzel. But he just sat there.



And yet that very same intimidating, regal, judicial setting with the men with their long white beards and their robes, the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priest's families, they assembled again a few months later and this time, as we've been reading Acts, the book of Acts, we don't see Jesus there. Of course, he's physically, tangibly, materially gone from the planet, but he's left his disciples and we find that that Sanhedrin had reassembled and now we have not the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the creator of all things, we have two fishermen from Galilee standing there, Peter and John. They were the same ones who scattered in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested. They were the ones, Peter, who's going to speak in this passage, he was the one that, when confronted by a teenage servant girl in Caiaphas' court that isn't half as intimidating as standing before the Sanhedrin, he was willing to curse and to cuss and to declare that he never even knew Jesus. Now we see him pulled in here with seemingly no support, nothing but a message that he had been faithful to preach, and now that court convened and said, hey, lean into that microphone, make your case. This is an intimidating scene that we're about to read here in Acts Chapter 4.

Now, I want you to feel like you were in the sandals of Peter and think about what that must have been like to be called on the carpet for your Christianity. I'm sorry to say that I've prayed for you this week that you would have a scene that feels something like that. I prayed very specifically that you might, everyone who hears this sermon, would have a setting in which they are feeling their pulse start to race and their palms to get a little damp and to have that shallow breathing experience. It may not be in front of the Supreme Court, but it may just be on an airplane next to a person sitting on a plane and you have that sense that I need to speak about Christ right now. It might be in the lunchroom, it could be on the bleachers when your kids are on the baseball field, but you have a sense in which I need to talk about Christ. And to be able to say that whatever we learn in this passage this morning in Acts Chapter 4 are the tools that we need to be able to speak courageously to our generation about the very same things that Christ is having Peter and John stand up for in Acts Chapter 4.

So, let's learn from this text as I've tried to pray you into a situation where you're going to need this passage. I trust that'll be the case for you, that you'll find not only the pressure of this situation in some smaller scale, but that you'll certainly have the success that Peter has here, because Peter roars, he doesn't sit there like a sheep before its shearers. He opens his mouth and says some things that I think his childhood friends would have to look back and say, how in the world is Peter saying all that? This is incredible. It's the opposite of what Jesus did.

Take a look at this text with me. It's Acts Chapter 4, beginning in verse 5 when it says, "On the next day," Acts 4:5. But to know what we're talking about, I guess you should glance at least a verse 3. "They had arrested them," John and Peter were arrested, "and put in custody until the next day because it was already evening." So he had eaten some prison food here in Jerusalem. But it says in verse 5, "The next day their rulers and elders and scribes," and those are big, weighty words, by the way, they represent so much in first-century culture. These are the ruling elites. And as if we didn't get it, as they "gathered together in Jerusalem," Luke starts dropping some names. Annas. He is really the emeritus high priest. They call him the high priest like you'd call Mr. President, someone who's already out of office. Annas is out of office. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, is actually the reigning high priest at this particular time, and of course, Luke adds his



name. And then there's Jonathan called in this passage, John. That's actually Annas' son and Alexandria. We're not sure who that is other than he was part of the high priestly family. All of the high priestly family was there.

"And when they had set them in their midst." So here are the two guys and if you could just reassemble in your mind what this looked like, this was a semicircle, a half-circle with 70 people, 35 on one side, 35 on the other and you're facing now the high priest. There you've got kind of crowded around in the front, you've got more than just Caiaphas. You've got Annas, you've got John, you've got Alexander. They're all there. There are probably people squeezing in through the portal, the doorway that opens up, as you could see out through the doorway, the temple gilded in gold with all those limestones. You had this amazing scene where you are watching two guys who should never be in that scenario. You would never elect them to represent you. You might as well just send, you know, just some dude to go represent the truth of the gospel. But here they are, two fishermen from Galilee. They said, as they set them before them, "Hey, by what power," verse 7, "or by what name did you do this?"

Now, this is a question like "when did you stop beating your wife?" There's no win for this because there was only one name that you could be preaching in the Temple Mount. You did everything in the name of the God of the Old Testament. You better not have any other leader in your mind. You better not have any other manifestation in your mind. You better have nothing to say but what the Pharisees and the scribes and the Sadducees would say. You better only speak in the name of Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament.

"But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them," knowing full well who he's talking to, "Rulers of the people and elders," verse 9, "if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel," leaning in through the doorway, "that by the name of Jesus Christ," the Messiah, everything in the Old Testament looked forward to this person who came from "Nazareth, whom you crucified." I don't think you had to add that if you're trying to make friends and influence people. But there it was. Right? You killed him, because they just convened a few months earlier when they did hand him over to the Roman officials to be crucified. "Whom God," by the way, "raised from the dead." You killed him. God brought him back to life.

"By him this man..." Remember, this is how it all started. This man on the temple courts who is there in Acts Chapter 3. He was the beggar. Everyone knew him. He'd been there for years. "By him," Jesus, "this man," this paraplegic, "is standing before you well. This Jesus..." Now he starts to recite Psalm 118:22, which, of course, you see a lot of stones there on the Temple Mount. It says it's a remarkable thing in the first century, these stones that Herod had used to refurbish this entire Temple Mount. Let's talk about the stone, the most important stone. "The stone that was rejected by you." You're the builders. You're in charge. You're the leaders. You're the shepherds of the people. You rejected him. You had him crucified but God vindicated him. He raised him from the dead, "he has become the cornerstone." A passage, by the way, echoed throughout the New Testament all the way back to Isaiah. I'm sorry, to Psalm 118:22. And again, if you just kind of want to get through this unscathed, then you don't want to raise any controversy, I don't know



why you'd tack this on, verse 12. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

That's the kind of stuff you want to hear Jesus saying. And Jesus just sat there, bound, hands behind his back, standing there. And now Peter is laying into them. He's giving them everything that they need to know about how bad it was for them to reject the Messiah and how, as we'll see in the rest of this passage later, they're not going to shut up. Tremendously bold. Tremendous courage. Where'd all this come from?

Well, verses 5 through 8 reminds us where they got this courage and if we're going to learn anything from this passage, I want that courage when my heart is starting to beat a little faster and I'm afraid to talk about Christ or someone brings up a topic and I know that God would have me speak up, I want to have that courage. Even if it were the Supreme Court, even if it were the nine justices of the Supreme Court. How could I have the courage to speak the truth? The rulers, the elders, the scribes of their day, he names the high priestly family. I mean, this is the elite of the elite and they said, "Tell us what's going on." And Peter says, "Hey, it's all about Christ."

Well, verse 8 adds a phrase. I want you to look at it. It's an important phrase in verse 8. "Peter, filled with the Spirit, said to them..." Please remember this. Everything that we've heard Peter doing in Chapters 2 and 3, you could say, you could preface it with "Filled with the Spirit." I mean, you could use that phrase. But Luke doesn't take the time to show that. Do you think that he was filled with the Spirit when he was preaching and 3,000 people got saved? You're darn right. He was filled with the Spirit. When he was preaching in Chapter 3 and saying, "Hey, you crucified him. But if you repent the times of refreshment will come." Do you think when we had all of those people, as we just learned in verse 4, we had 5,000 men, the number of men goes to 5,000, do you think the Spirit of God was filling Peter when he was speaking? Absolutely. But Luke doesn't take time to tell us that. But here we have the Holy Spirit clearly articulated as being the motivating fueling factor in how he can stand there and do something so bold, so courageous.

I'd like to have courage, wouldn't you? When you know you have to be a representative of Christ. As I pray you into some kind of situation this week where you have to speak up, wouldn't you'd like to have courage and not anxiety? Wouldn't you like to expel the fear and be able to say this? I mean, sure, with gentleness and respect, but firmly, deliberately, clearly, resolutely. Here's what the Bible says. Here's what Christ taught. We're going to need that courage and I want to tell you this, you can expect that courage because that phrase can certainly apply to your life.

Number one on your outline if for taking notes, verses 5 through 8, you need to "Expect Divine Courage" because this is the courage that Christ promised, not just to the first century apostles. Yes, there's a manifestation of the Spirit that I think is unique to the first century. The thing that made this whole sermon be the talk of the town started with that miracle. If God were granting the ability for every Christian just to wield the power of the Spirit to heal and change nature and withhold the rain, or whatever, we would live in a chaotic world. That's clearly not what we have going on today. But the manifestation of the Spirit, as I've already taught in the book of Acts, is clearly focused on the role that they have to be filled with the Spirit so that they might be witnesses. What's so hard about that? Well, it's hard in our day, and it was hard in their day to



speak up about Christ because you're going to get blowback, you're going to get pushback. It won't be easy. So we need the power of the Spirit. We need the Spirit to fill us.

Now, Luke recorded Jesus' sermon on this, but I'd like you to take it to Matthew's explanation of it, because he elaborates a little bit more on this of what Jesus had taught. I'd like you to turn to Matthew Chapter 10 because you should see this and I think this is the reason why Luke was willing to write down that phrase by God's direction, because we need to get our minds back to what Jesus said regarding the Spirit when we're in those pressure situations and you're called on the carpet to stand up for the truth.

He promised this. Matthew Chapter 10. Drop-down in this passage to verse 16. He says in this passage, you can see Jesus teaching here and the apostles are there listening, he says, "Behold, I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves." Now, if you are a lamb and there are wolves around, they see lunch. Right? They're going to eat you up. This is not going to be a good thing for you to be a lamb, and yet you're going to see the lamb, in this case, Peter, who was a shepherd of the sheep, he is one as well. He's part of the flock in which he's shepherding but the reality of it, he roars like a lion. He sends the wolves here back on their heels. And yet Jesus says, listen, "I want you to be wise as serpents," be super shrewd, be super smart in all this, "but be as innocent as doves." No underhanded stuff, no twisting of things, be completely forthright and integrous. But you've got to be careful. "Beware of men, for they can deliver you over to the courts." Well, here's the first fulfillment of this in Acts Chapter 4 there before the ultimate Jewish court, the Sanhedrin, the council of the 70.

"And they'll flog you," as we'll see later. They're going to flog them. They're going to flog you, not just in Jerusalem, in the Council of the Hewn Stones there off the Temple Mount, they're going to "flog you in the synagogues," all over Israel, "and you'll be dragged before governors and kings," verse 18 says, "for my sake." That's, of course, what we're going to see. We can't get out of the book of Acts before we see them being dragged before governors and kings. "To," notice this now in the middle of verse 18, to be silent like sheep before its shearers and not say a word, not open your mouth. No, no. To be really, you know, careful about what you say. No. To be witnesses, "to bear witness," to speak the truth, to say what is right, to stand up for the light of the gospel, "to bear witness before them and," not only them in Israel and the synagogues, but "before the Gentiles," as well. There's the book of Acts forecasted right there.

"When they deliver you over," now, here's what I want to talk about, the courage, "do not be anxious." That's a scary thing to be put in front of people who don't like what you're saying. "Don't be anxious to how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour," underline this now, "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." I don't think we're talking about the infallible prophetic word of the New Testament prophets. I think we're talking about clearly what we have all experienced if you've had any experience stepping out of your comfort zone to talk about Christ and you find that those people don't like it and you get pushback. You've found, haven't you, that God's Spirit has put those kinds of words in your mouth to articulate things that you look back on like I'm sure Peter must have once he got out of that scene and said, "Wow, I can't believe I said that. I





stood up for what was right. I spoke the truth. I did what I should do. I said it respectfully. I said it kindly, but I said it and I had courage."

I want to force you into that discussion as well, I trust. If you go to a small group this week and you go through those questions on the back of your worksheet, one of those questions is going to get you to discuss the experience that I think most Christians have had who've been faithful to do what God has asked them to do, to have that moment where you sense God has really empowered and emboldened me to say what I needed to say. God was at work. If it was anything else, any other circumstance, I can't even believe I would do that or say that. But God helped me say those things to stand up for what was true without compromise.

God's promise here in the passage in verse 20 of Matthew 10 echoed throughout Jesus' ministry, recorded in the book of Luke, is now being played out in the book of Acts, that Peter was filled with the Spirit. I think that is the reason that phrase is there, because here is a prime example of that particular promise. Peter is getting the words to say, and it's the kind of courage that you can expect if you meet some criteria.

Let me give you four real quick, sub-points here. If you're going to expect divine courage, let me start with a basic fundamental thing, but I got to say it, and I think anytime anyone preaches about anything related to the Spirit's work, we got to start here. Ephesians Chapter 3 verse 16. You don't need to turn there, we'll get through these really quick, but jot this down. You've got to be a real Christian, you got to be a Christian. Because the Bible's really clear, you're not good at the empowerment or the emboldenment or the strength of the Spirit getting you to say things that you wouldn't otherwise say, unless the Spirit of God lives in you. Romans 8 says, "You're not a son of God if you don't have the Spirit of God." So we need to make sure the Spirit of God dwells in you and the way you get the Spirit of God, according to Ephesians Chapter 1, is that you have a response that is right to the gospel. Which means that you have seen your sin for what it is, you put your trust in Christ, and as a real Christian, the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Here's what it says in Ephesians Chapter 3 verse 16. Paul is praying that "You may be granted to be strengthened with power through God's Spirit in your inner being." The Spirit of God in your inner being, in your inner self, in your inner person. That relationship with the Spirit, the Bible says is there and that power to be strengthened to do things you wouldn't otherwise be able to do. I'm talking about the ability for you to stand up for the truth, even when you're intimidated, even when you're nervous, even when you're scared, is the ability that exists when the Spirit of God dwells in you, so you got to be a real Christian. Churchgoers aren't promised this. People who just know some things about the Bible aren't promised this. So the first criteria, you've got to make sure that you're a real Christian. The Spirit of God dwells in you if you're a real Christian, we're on our way.

Number two, Letter "B." You've got to be engaged in the Spirit's work. You have to purpose to do what the Spirit is purposing to do. Let me give you a passage for this. Jot this down, John Chapter 16 verses 7 and 8. John 16:7-8. Here's a nickname, if you will, a title, an appellation given to the Holy Spirit. It's the Greek word "parakletos." It's translated in the English Standard Version in verse 7, it's translated "helper." He says, I'm going to go away, physically, tangibly, leave the



planet. But if I go away, that's a good thing, because then I'm going to send the Helper, the parakletos. "Para" means "next to." "Kleos" means to "call in." Here is this person who's going to be called in, to be in your life. He's not going to be "with" you, he's going to be "in" you. The Spirit is going to reside in you. The parakletos, the helper.

Now listen to this phrase in verse 8. "And when he comes," listen to the pronoun, "he will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment." He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Well, what's the point? The Spirit's going to come. "If I leave," he says to his apostles, "then you're going to have the Spirit dwelling in you," and that helper, that strengthener, is going to be in you and guess what he wants to do all around in every relationship, in all the non-Christians in your world, he wants to convict them, bring them to conviction, about the truth of these things: sin, that they're sinners, when the world wants to believe that they're all fine and people are basically good, that there's a sin problem, righteousness: that we don't have enough of it. We need to get rid of our righteousness and replace it with Christ's righteousness, and judgment: "Appointed for man once to die, and then comes the judgment." People don't even like to think about that. Sin, righteousness and judgment. That's the Spirit's agenda. The Spirit's work is to see that happen with all the people who you know who are not Christians in your life. You're ambassadors of a message and the Spirit wants to get that done.

Well, if that's my intention, then guess what? The Spirit is there to help. He's there to strengthen. He's there to embolden. He will give us words to say. Do we work hard to prepare to make a defense? Of course we do. But I'm not going to, in my preparation, sit there with a flow chart and cue cards and have to say, well, I got to get all these memorized responses in my mind. The Bible says we need to have the Spirit's intention in my relationships that I hope my neighbor can see his sin, I hope my neighbor can see their need for righteousness, I hope my neighbor will know that one day they're going to face the judgment and they're going to be separated like sheep from goats. Some are going to go into the kingdom, and some are going to be excluded from the kingdom. I want my neighbor to be saved. That's my intention in the relationships I have with non-Christians and that's the Spirit's intention. Well, here's the great word, parakletos. He wants to come in and help. I want the divine courage that comes from the relationship that I have with the Spirit living in me, Letter "A," and that I'm working to the same goals that he is, Letter "B."

Letter "C." Number three. We need to keep our focus on God's message. We need to utilize the Holy Spirit's book. We need to make sure that we are reciting the Holy Spirit's stuff. He wrote a book that's got truth in it, it's got arguments in it, that's got ideas in it as we engage in the battle of ideas, as I put it last week. I want to make sure that I'm utilizing his Word. See, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit was the one who moved people along to write these words down. So I have the Bible. This is the product of the Spirit of God. That product is living and active, it's sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces through and divides like bone and marrow. It distinguishes the thoughts and intentions of the heart. So it is a powerful book with powerful information. I want to make sure if I'm going to engage in a conversation with non-Christians, just like Peter can't even help quoting the Bible, Psalm 118:22. I mean his whole sermon in Chapter 3 and Chapter 2 are all about Scripture. He's got the Bible infiltrating his mind and he's speaking biblical truth.



If I want to have courage when I'm sitting next to someone, talking with someone, some topic comes up at work, I want to make sure that I've got the Spirit in my life, I'm a real Christian, that my goals are the Spirit's goals, I'm not just dropping a Jesus loves you, you know, line on them. I really want them to be convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment so that they'll trust in Christ. Then I going to use the Spirit of God, his book, I going to use that book, that powerful book and the Spirit of God is ready to make that happen. Here's the passage I quoted last week, Second Corinthians, Chapter 10 verses 4 and 5, I think I made you turn there, that we have arguments. We have things that we tear down these strongholds by, and they're not weapons of the flesh. Therefore, they must be weapons of the Spirit. They're divinely powerful to take down arguments that raise themselves up against the knowledge of God.

So I need to work in these conversations in the battle of ideas to use God's truth, to accomplish God's objectives, because God dwells in me. Spirit of God in me, Spirit of God's objective, Spirit of God's truth, the truths of Scripture and how bold can we be.

See, you have that. I don't care if you are a fisherman before the Supreme Court. Think about it. How confident should an old grandma be walking into a knife fight in the alley behind her house? Not very confident unless, of course, she's got a .357 magnum in her hand. Then you can even mouth off a little bit because you brought a gun to a knife fight. So you're OK. If you had a hand grenade that would even be better. Just roll that thing right toward their feet. You're in good shape. You have the weapons because they're divinely powerful to destroy things. So I don't have to be the smartest guy in the room. I don't have to be the most articulate person. I don't have to be the guy who has all of these things going for him to have a conversation with someone who's smarter than me, older than me, more experienced than me, to say, you know what, we've got a sin problem. We need the righteousness of Christ. You're going to die and face the judgment. You need to trust in Jesus Christ. Those are things I can say and the Bible says I can have the power of God's Spirit working through me.

Let me add a fourth one. One word, pray. You got to pray. The Bible talks about praying in the Spirit, which may sound mystical, but it's about me praying the things that the Spirit cares about. It's about me relying on the Spirit of God. It's about the Spirit of God helping me pray the right things, even when I don't know the right things to pray. Roman Chapter 8. I need to trust that my expressions to God are going to be responded to by God, and especially when I'm nervous or anxious. The Bible says this, and you know the passage, Philippians Chapter 4 verse 6. "Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known God." Tell God what you need.

And that verse, by the way, is not about, you know, you scoring touchdowns on your high school football team or padding your portfolio at work. Right? The whole thing about God strengthening us is about getting his objectives done in our world. Here's his objective: for you to be light and truth in your world. For you to be an agent of people being saved out of a crooked and perverse generation that we live in. The Bible says you can be an agent of that.

I love to quote Nehemiah 2 because Nehemiah 2, talk about a scary situation, you're the cupbearer to the king, which I don't know how he gets insurance for himself, being the guy who





drinks the cup to see if there's poison in it. But that's his job. He's the cupbearer to Artaxerxes. As he's serving there during this Babylonian captivity in the fifth century before Christ, he's there knowing and hearing a report about Jerusalem being torn down and burned and is in shambles and he feels bad about it, so he goes to the king and he's going about his work and the king says, "You're sad. What's wrong with you?".

Here's what he says in Nehemiah Chapter 2 verse 2 in the first-person he says, "I was very much afraid." The king had just talked to me. He'd asked me a question. And so he starts to answer. He says, "Hey, king, live forever. You know, here's why I'm upset. My hometown, my Jerusalem, the capital of my old hometown. I know I'm in exile here, but it's in ruins. The gates have been destroyed by fire." The king with all the power, this is an autocratic, dictatorial monarch of the ancient world says, "What do you want? What are you requesting?" Now, he just said he's scared and so here's the next line, verse 4. "So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I answered the king." I love that. This is in midsentence, he prays. He's afraid. And he answers the king boldly. "Hey, if it pleases the king, if your servant has found favor your sight, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it," I want to rebuild it. What? You're working in the cafeteria, so to speak, in this thing, and you want to go and lead this charge? "Yes." That's what the book does. He unfolds the history of Israel, it's in the next chapter, by being the leader of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days. That's an amazing story. It all starts by him having the guts to stand up for what's right in front of the king.

The agency in that passage and it's the agency, I think, for you to have courage when you're in the middle of that situation and you're afraid, you say, "God...", I don't know. He doesn't tell us what he says there. But I mean, we all know that feeling when, "God help me, God strengthen me, God give me the words to say." You should expect to find courage. You got all the tools if you recognize that it's a real Christian engaging in the Spirit of God's work, using the Spirit of God's truths, and you're relying on the Spirit by asking God to empower you and help you. That's the courage that I think you could find, like Peter found, by being able to look at the rulers of the people and the elders square in the eye and give them the biblical answer.

What's the biblical answer? This is what he says in verse 9. Back to our text, Acts Chapter 4 verse 9. If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, now there's some good logic in that whether the logic of the fisherman was stellar, you know, because of his education. I mean, that's a spiritually good way to start this conversation. Let's remember how this all started. I know you're not happy about us talking about the resurrection because there are Sadducees here and they didn't like that, they don't believe in the afterlife. But let's just see how this all started. This started by a miraculous scene of a paralytic standing up and walking. Are we really on trial for that? You want me to tell you how that happened? I can tell you how that happened. If you want to know "by what means this man has been healed, well, let it be known to all of you and let all of Israel know that by the name," the authority, "of Jesus Christ," the Messiah. Christ: that's what it means. Christ, the Messiah. The fulfillment of all the Old Testament that you study every day, "of Nazareth," he's going to be called a Nazarene, "whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead -- by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone."



Listen, the good thing that's done here and the message, it's all related to the cornerstone. The cornerstone.

Well, there's some debate about the usage of that word, both in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, and the New Testament. Some people argue that it's the keystone at the top of an arch. I think in Paul's writings, he is thinking of that, he has that in view, where if you pull that out, everything collapses. It's also, though, the cornerstone, which is translated, we get the sense of how we normally think of the cornerstone as a foundational stone. If you go to Israel today and you see even the Turks had rebuilt the walls. They use a lot of the stones that Herod had had quarried. There they were, these gigantic stones, the cornerstone, the foundational stone in the corner. I mean, that's an essential piece you can't do without it. That's the point of cornerstone. This is the ultimate. But you rejected it, you sniffed at it like you were choosing potato chips at subway. You know, you just say, "Well, I don't want that one." You rejected it. But it's THE thing. This is THE important, indispensable, vital, crucial, you can't-live-without-it thing. It's a person and his authority is divine.

Jesus is presented that way throughout the preaching in the book of Acts, throughout the New Testament. Jesus said it himself in John Chapter 5. "You should honor me as you honor the Father," just as, "kathos" in Greek, just the same way, "to the equivalent way that you should honor the Father." That's why we sit around here 2,000 years later, singing songs in worship that exalts Christ, we worship Christ. We ascribe to Christ the glory that is due his name. Everything else comes from that.

Matter of fact, he starts with, and I don't want to make too much of the connection between verse 9 and verse 11, but the good deed certainly comes from the cornerstone, the ultimate one. As the Bible says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." Everything good comes from God. As Paul said in his evangelism, you guys need to know that "God gives life and breath and everything else." He gives all things. When you share the gospel or you stand up for Christianity in your world, you do recognize that we're not just saying, "Well, you know there's Hinduism, there's Buddhism, there's Islam, there's Christianity. I chose Christianity and here's kind of the reason I chose the barbecue potato chips. I kind of like this one better than the sour cream. And, you know, I don't like the ridges." That's not what we're doing. This is like everything else is in another category. Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Mohammed one day we'll be bowing down to Christ. Right? Confucius, bowing down to Christ, Joseph Smith, bowing down to Christ. Right? With Hitler bowing down to Christ, Paul Poppe bowing down to Christ. Every political leader in the world, bowing down to Christ, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is the boss, is "the Lord." That's the picture.

And if he is the exact representation of the nature of the Father, he is all things, all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. "He is before all things. He's the head of the Church. So that in all things he might have preeminence." He is the ultimate person. "And every good thing comes from him," including the healing in this case, the supernatural healing of a paraplegic on the Temple Mount. That picture of exalting Christ is what we're trying to do in our evangelism. Here they come, Peter and John, preaching the supremacy of Christ. That's what we're promoting. That is the picture. It is not taking one religion over another. It's knowing that there is no other religion



because it is the supreme religion, because it's the only religion, because Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Number two, let's write it down this way. You need to "Promote Christ's Supremacy." He is supreme. "He's before all things. He created all things. All things were created by him and for him." I keep quoting these lines from Colossians Chapter 1. Everything that we have all traces its way back to Christ. "Nothing was created," John Chapter 1, "that was created that wasn't created by Christ." He's the "protokos," which is the word we translate "first-born" but it gives people the wrong impression that it's somehow he was the first one created. Well, the next line says "everything that was created, created by him, protokos means he's at the top of the heap. He is the inheritor of all things.

God has given him all glory and all honor, and everyone will glorify Christ. That glorification of Christ is going to glorify the Father. We're presenting people the only person in the world who's worthy of worship. Right?

The only person who ever came to the world who had toenails or walked around on our planet, the one who you should bow down to and worship, just like they did in the gospels, which would be full blasphemy if it were not for the fact that Jesus is God, is the one who we exalt. You're telling your neighbor, Jesus is Lord. That's what you're saying. He is the one that people might reject but you're rejecting the cornerstone. You're rejecting the essential, indispensable central person of all history. "All the kingdoms will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. Every knee will bow."

By the way, in verse 10, as I said, if you're trying to win friends and influence people, you probably are not going to say, "Hey, this Jesus that I'm going to really pump up here. Hey, you crucified him." But that happens whenever you really promote Christ-like you ought to. As Hebrews 4 says, if "he was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin." the more you focus on the sinless perfection of Christ and the exaltation and authority of Christ, the more you picture Christ as perfect and exalted and transcendent, guess what we start thinking about ourselves? We're bad. We're not good.

I know that we try to distance our neighbors from the indictment of "you crucified him," but I've tried to make that clear throughout this series and throughout the preaching in Acts that to say Jesus died for my sins is an admission of the same thing. If I'm going to be saved, if Christ is going to save me, the only way to save me is for him to die because of my sins. There's a correspondence between my transgression and his death. Therefore, you could say that my sins caused his death. It's a payment for my sin. If that's the case, then that indictment works for your neighbor as well as for the Sanhedrin. You crucified him. You're guilty. I say the more you exalt Christ, which should be your theme in evangelism, Christ is everything. He's in a category by himself. Because the more you exalt Christ, the more sin becomes a natural part of the conversation. Most people think, "Well, I'm going to die and I'm going to go before God, I'm going to get in." Why? "Because I'm basically a good person." The more you see the goodness of God and the more you see the perfection of the triunity of God, the more you see Christ as the perfect one, the less you think you're a good person.



Now, there was a thick-headed guy and we read about it in Luke Chapter 18, who had a hard time seeing that, but Jesus was sure trying to drive the point home. He finally got the point, I think. But it started with him just asking a question that should, you would think, get a pat on the back from Jesus. He said, "Hey, good teacher. What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Remember that passage? I mean it's in all the synoptic gospels. Matthew 19, Luke Chapter 18. But in this passage, we learn in a composite of all those that he's rich, he's young, and he's some kind of ruler in Israel. He says, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' You think fantastic, that's a great question. That's good. And you were even respectful, you said "good teacher."

Jesus, as is often the case, says, "Listen, you've got to address the problem here and the problem starts with you calling me 'good.' Do you even know what you're saying?" Let's think in absolute terms, because you're so used to thinking in relative terms because you are a rich, young ruler. You're always seeing yourself as better than other people, and I know that's what's going to happen in the argument, so I know that that is the indictment. He says, "Good? No one's good but God alone." We can use the word "good" in a relative sense. We can use the word "righteous" in a relative sense. We can say this man is a righteous man. But then we look at the absolute sense and we say, well, "There's none righteous. No, not one." There is no one who does good. I mean, that's what the Bible says.

So in absolute terms, we've got to think in absolute terms, and the only way our neighbor is going to start to think in absolute terms is to exalt Christ to the supreme place. The more we see the greatness of God like Isaiah did in Isaiah 6, the quicker we see our own sin. "Woe to me, I am ruined. I'm a man of unclean lips." Well, Isaiah wasn't saying that in Chapter 3, but in Chapter 6 you said it. Why? Because you got a vision of the exalted God. The more we exalt Christ in the minds of our neighbors, the more they see dying and standing before God and trying to claim some kind of relativistic, I'm better than the next guy, isn't going to cut it. What you need is the righteousness that you don't have, to exchange yours for his, and then, hey, you'll do well on Judgment Day. But first, I got to be convicted of sin, I got to be convicted of the lack of my righteousness and the righteousness that I need, and I need to be convicted of the fact that I'm going to stand there one day as real as I'm sitting here today.

So it is that the rich young ruler struggled with that, so Jesus throws at them what all of us should definitely present to our neighbors, and that is there is a standard that reflects the goodness of God and those are the commandments. He says, let's talk about the commandments. He lists some there in Luke 18. Let's talk about adultery. Let's talk about murder. Let's talk about stealing. Let's talk about lying. Let's talk about honoring your parents. And, do you know the passage? Do you know what the rich ruler says? "I've done all that. Not only am I doing all that, I've done all that from my youth." So we know he's missing the point because Jesus tried to get him thinking immediately in absolute categories about good. No one is good in a perfect sense except for God.

Now let's talk about his good standard. Have you done those things? "Yeah, I've done those." Well, let's call his mom real quick. I'll bet we got a few moments where, you know, Junior, even the stellar, you know, Harvard grad here, I'll bet, you know, I'll bet there were times he didn't honor his mother. And you want to talk about lying? I mean, I don't know. There's not anyone



who hasn't lied. This guy's clearly not the one exception who hasn't lied. Every man is a liar, the Bible says. In an absolute sense, everyone has been deceptive. I mean, even the answer to the question. Yes, I have done that. If I ask have you ever lied? If you say no. Well, I got one right there. I'm a witness to it. You are lying to me. So the idea of him saying, "Yeah, I've done all that," Jesus then cuts right to the heart of the matter. He goes from the second tablet of the Ten Commandments to the first tablet and it starts with this, "You're going to have no other gods before me." And you go, well, let's just prove to the disciples here that we don't have a good, perfect man in front of us. Jesus says, "Go sell everything you have. Give it away. Give it to the poor. Come and follow me."

Oh, this is not just trying to punish you. You'll have riches in heaven. I mean, you have to store up a lot of riches for that. But here's the thing. Get rid of it all. And you know what happened. Right? He went away sad because he had much wealth. Do you want to talk about the problem of wealth? It can be a blessing. It was in Abraham's life, it can be a reward, it can be a good thing. But here's the deal. It can also be a temptation to idolatry, which, of course, it was in this man's life, because the very first commandment about not having any other gods before you, here is the perfect person, the one who they were picking up stones to stone him because he was making himself equal to God. Jesus, the perfect one says, hey, who's good? "No one's good but God alone." Oh, and you know what, that's what they're saying about me. That's what they're proving about me. I've never been... I've been tempted every way, but yet without sin. And I'm telling you, the fullness of deity dwelling in bodily form, I'm telling you get rid of your stuff and you won't obey God.

You're showing me that your money is more important than me and my authority in your life. So Jesus turns to his disciples and says, "How hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Why? Because it's easy when you start collecting a lot of stuff to not want to part with all that stuff. It's easy for us to make an idol out of the things that I have because I don't want to let them go. He proves right there that he breaks the first and foremost command, "To love God with all your heart, soul, strength, the mind," because as the Bible says, "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." He goes right to that love of his money and he won't let it go.

And of course, the Bible's very clear, it's true for you, it's true for me. it's true for every rich person, it's true for every poor person. Luke Chapter 14 makes it super, super clear. Verse 33, "No one can be my disciple unless he gives up everything he has." It doesn't mean we pass out, you know, a Bank of America deposit slip to Compass Bible Church, become a Christian, great, put it all in our bank account. It does mean this: in your mind, you're giving it over to God. If he asks for 10%, then you give 10%. If he asked for an extra night out of the week, you give of your time. He's asking you to serve and give your energy to the cause of Christ, work with a Junior Highers or go and be a counselor in high school, you do it because God is the Lord of all things in your life. Nothing comes before him.

That is the implication of the supremacy of Christ. Here's what Jesus did in his evangelism, when you're thinking about the supremacy of Christ, the goodness of who I am, if I say forsake everything and follow me, you need to know that you got to count the cost. To quote again, Luke 14, count the cost. Someone has an army coming against them with 20,000, you got 10,000,





you're going to surrender. Those 10,000 troops, that new commander may say to you, take a thousand of those troops and send them over here. Take 5,000 of those troops and send them over here. Why? Because the guy who you've just surrendered to is in charge. And so we're promoting the supremacy of Christ to a world. It's going to expose their sin. Eventually they're going to feel the sense that my sin put Christ on a cross, that he is the Lord, he is the king. He should be the indispensable cornerstone of my life.

If Christ is not the cornerstone of your life, if he's not the ultimate, indispensable person in your life, if he's supplanted by your love for any person, anything, then we've got a problem because New Testament Christianity is very clear. Christ has to be Lord. He has to be king. That's the supremacy of Christ that we're promoting, the Christ who gives us all good things. The Christ who is rejected by so many, but he is the indispensable cornerstone.

Well, that's hard enough to swallow, particularly when you start pointing out how sinful we are. But in verse 12, he says, oh, and by the way, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Notice the shift from third person to second person in the middle of verse 12 and the end of verse 12. "There is no other name under heaven given among men," among people, those people out there. Then he says, "by which we must be saved," first person, plural. We all have to be saved and this is the only way, because there's salvation in no one else.

When you're doing evangelism, when you're pointing people to Christ, when God leads you into that situation I'm praying that you're led into, and I'm not leading you into that through my praying just so that you can have pressure, but so you can experience the divine courage we're talking about. You can make sure that you're giving them the exalted picture of a Christ to whom we owe everything. Then you always remember, number three, salvation's exclusivity. Jot it down. "Remember Salvation's Exclusivity" because there is no other way. Jesus made that clear. People don't like it. Call Oprah and tell her there's only one way as unpopular as that is.

Just like if you lived on the 12th floor of some, you know, Brooklyn apartment building and there was a fire that broke out and you got four doors, you got a spacious apartment that leads to the hallways and the back rooms, but there's one escape route. It's a wrought iron, very uncomfortable, hard to get down a fire escape. There's not even a big opening there. You've probably got to 30 inches probably to get through. I mean, you've got to kind of squeeze through this little portal. "I'd rather go through that door. Maybe it's a really nice apartment. I got a, you know, a nice little 40-inch doorway here. I got a set of double doors I can get through." But all of that, though, leads to death.

There's a narrow way and I understand that it's narrow. It's the only way because all truth claims in the Bible are objectively true. That's how they're presented as corresponding to real things. Mr. Philosopher, we cannot take the claims of the Bible and throw them into the category of relativistic claims, philosophical ideas, they're not preference-based issues, they're all relating to facts. That's what the Bible presents us with. Matter of fact, take the most beloved passage in all of the New Testament, John Chapter 3 verse 16. I want you to look at the context of that. If you're struggling with the fact that there is an absolute nature to Christ's claims, just read Jesus'



discussion with Nicodemus. Go over it a few times and just look to see if Jesus is not trying to show things about spiritual realities that affect realities in our future.

He says things like this: "You cannot see the kingdom of God unless you were born again." I mean, I know we love the fact that he says, "God so loved the world," but you know the whole point about perishing, he elaborates on later in the passage he says, you know what? "If you believe in the Son, you have life. If you don't obey the Son, the wrath of God abides upon you." I mean, the reality of the fact that your future is really dependent on what you do with Christ is the whole point of everything Jesus said. I mean, the realities are all reflecting, pointing to, discussing something objective, something real.

This is called the Correspondence Theory of Truth. Francis Schaffer talked about "true truth." We're talking about things that really are true. This is not a preference. This is not an idea that we can sit around and say doesn't matter. It is objective and is true and is saving as if I'm going to go out scuba diving with you this afternoon. As we go to the boat, I say, "Here are four tanks. Choose anyone you want because I want you to have a lot of choices. This one has oxygen in it. This one has teargas in it. This one has hand soap in it. This one has ice tea in it. Pick one." You got a choice.

In our world, they want to pick religion like they pick bags of potato chips, as though one is just a preference because I like this one better than that one. This is not about preference. It's about you have a lot of doors to choose. There's only one door that's going to get you out of this problem. Jesus said it. I am the way, the truth and the life. Some come to the Father through me. No, I don't think that's it. I'm the way, the truth, the life. Many people will come to the Father... Nah, that's not it either. I am the way, the truth, the life. There might be some that come to the... No. Darn! (audience laughing) I'm the way, the truth, the life. Maybe you can help me. "No one, no one comes to the Father except through me." You're such a dork, Pastor Mike. Yes, I understand. I'm trying to get you to see. "No one comes to the Father except through Christ."

These are absolute claims about truth that relate to reality. Future realities for you and I. Real realities here and now. Your problem of sin paid for through one means, one mechanism. The Bible's very clear. People have to respond to that. "Well, that's narrowminded. I don't like it. I don't like the exclusivity." Listen, even just affirming the supremacy part should get you uncomfortable. To add this exclusivity part, I mean, they just naturally go together. If Christ is Lord of all, I mean, it makes perfect sense that he's the exclusive means of salvation.

Let me turn you to this passage, Luke 14. Jesus again responds in a way that doesn't seem very nice, but it's necessary. Someone's sitting there after hearing what Jesus said in Luke 14, look at verse 15, "When one of those reclined at the table with him heard these things he said," Luke 14:15, "he said, 'Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!'" That's going to be great, man. And Jesus can't just say, "Yeah, it will." He says, "No, I don't think you get it." Mr. Optimism here talking about how great it's going to be. There are a lot of people that aren't going to see that day. Oh, they've been invited, but they're not going to make it because they refuse.



Verse 16, he said of them, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at that time for the banquet his servants said to him, "say to those who'd been invited," that's what the master said, 'Come, for everything's ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses," verse 18, "and the first said, 'Well, I've bought a field, and I must go check it out,'" got to "'go see it. Please have me excused." Verse 19, "And another said, 'I've got five yoke of oxen. I got to go test drive them and examine them. Please let me be excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife,'" I got a honeymoon to go on. I can't come. "Therefore," please, "I can't come." Excuse me.

Verse 21. "So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry. He said, 'Go quickly out in the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame.' And the servants said, 'Sir, what you've commanded, we've done. There's still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and the hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.'" Now there may be only one portal to be saved, but that exclusive portal to be saved is one that Christians are supposed to be compelling people, in this illustration, to make sure that they get to that banquet in the kingdom and get to eat bread there.

The whole point is this is the most inclusive religion there is because we want people from every tongue, tribe, and nation to hear this message. It is the driving force of missions and it has been from the entire beginning of the Church. Romans Chapter 10. It says, listen, the whole point of salvation can only be had in the name of Christ. "You have to call on the name of the Lord and then you'll be saved." But how in the world are you going to call on the name of the Lord and be saved, if you don't believe it? How you going to believe unless someone tells you, how is someone going to tell you, you know, unless there's a preacher and the preacher's been sent?

I mean, these are the realities of missions work that should motivate you to speak up this week even when you're nervous. There's only one way for your friends and your neighbors and every acquaintance in your life to be saved. This is an exclusivity that adds an urgency. We must be saved. He uses that firstperson pronoun. Hey, guys, everyone in the room. We need to be saved through this one means of salvation.

If you've ever been to D.C. and seen the Supreme Court building, talk about those 44 ascending steps, it is quite an impressive building just across from the capital, of course. Those eight columns out in front. Some people call the Supreme Court building and the court that meets in it the highest court in the land. I'm here today to tell you that it is not the highest court. There is a higher court and it's found in D.C. Actually, it's found right above the heads of those nine justices dressed in robes, just above their heads on the floor above the court, there's another court. It used to be a storage room, but they converted it years ago into a basketball court and the tongue-in-cheek justices and the clerks like to call it "the highest court in the land." There's even a sign on the wall that says, it's painted on the wall, don't bounce the basketball on this floor when court is in session. I mean, it's right above the highest court in the land.

Sports Illustrated last year wrote an article about this. What I loved about it was the cartoon that was drawn for it as the header for the article and it showed all the Supreme Court justices dressed in their robes playing basketball on the court, you know, dunking and shooting. And, you



know, it's a funny little cartoon, but I started thinking about that. It's an interesting thing that they tell the history, and I've read a couple of articles on this, the history of the justices who used to like to go up there and not just shoot around, but actually engage in basketball games competitively on that court. Even today, they talk about the justices who like to go play the game on that court. Reporters will say that if you see the justices coming in on crutches, which they tell very, you know, variety of stories about, they know where they got injured. They got injured on the highest court in the land.

It got me thinking as I was thinking about these two fishermen before the most intimidating court in their land. I thought about how nervous I would be if they said, hey, go defend Christianity in front of the Supreme Court. That would be a scary thing. But I thought about the court that's above that court. And I started looking again at the picture of the nine justices, and I thought, well, if the court that I was going to be on with the justices wasn't the one downstairs, but the one above their heads upstairs, and I could bring like four guys from our church who play on our basketball league here and we go and play the justices on that court. I mean, I know Gorsuch is kind of tall, posting up down low. Roberts I hear is a pretty good shot. But I mean, you take Breyer, I'll take Ginsburg. (audience laughter) I mean, I think we're going to win. I mean, I really think we're going to win. Because the rules for the court upstairs are not the rules for the court downstairs. Your Harvard education doesn't mean much to me when I'm dunking over Ruth. Right? I mean, this is a different ballgame now.

The rules for the court upstairs. The New Testament in First Corinthians 1 said, I mean, it's God basically just saying, "Where's the scholar? Where's the scribe? Where's the debater of this age?" In their wisdom have they even found God? Of course they haven't. No. "God has been pleased through the 'foolishness' of what is preached by us." Right? "That puts to shame the wisdom of the wise." In all their learning, all their wisdom, they don't get it. "But we preach Christ crucified, the power of God "to save those who believe." It's a message that your junior high could share with a Supreme Court justice. Those rules apply. There is sin. There is a problem. There's a solution in Christ. Trust in him. The exclusive supreme Christ in the universe, that saves you. That message trumps every erudite argument you could raise up against it. That's the argument from the truth of the living and active Word of God that trumps every single argument on this planet. God was pleased to entrust it to us. "He's chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise."

If God calls you to the Supreme Court to testify to the exclusivity of the supremely exalted Christ, I pray you'll have divine courage. I guarantee you the Spirit of God dwells in you. You're doing God's work with God's Word, and you ask God for it, you're going to have it. It may not be the Supreme Court. Matter of fact, I doubt any of you will be arguing in front of the Supreme Court. But I'll tell you, we got our own little pressurized situations that are going to come this week. I want you to trust and expect and pray that God would give your mouth the words to say because the truth of the gospel is one you should never be ashamed of. It is the power of God for all who believe.

Let's pray. God, I know you chose the foolish things in the world to shame the wise, the weak things of the world to shame the strong, the low, the despised things, things that are not to bring



to nothing the things that are so that no human being may boast in the presence of God. It's because of him that we're in Christ who's become for us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Let him who boasts boast in the Lord. That's the theme, I hope, of our evangelism, the supreme and exalted Christ, the King of kings, Lord of lords, who, though he stood silent before that court sends us into our courtrooms, into the pressurized situations when we're called on the carpet to be like Peter, a roaring lion. "The wicked, they flee when no one pursues them, but the righteous are as bold as a lion." Give us the boldness this week to speak the truth of your message to our generation.

In Jesus name. Amen