



Pointing People to Christ-Part 7

Resolved to Keep Speaking

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Well, how would you like to get thrown in jail for five years? Well, it could happen according to U.S. Code 17.0.3, you'll be thrown in jail for up to five years if you don't deliver my mail. That's right. The code reads that if you are a postal worker and you don't deliver my mail, according to not only the code will you be fined, you could go to jail for up to five years. I like the way the code reads. It says, if you destroy my mail, if you detain my mail or if you delay the delivery of my mail, all of those are punishable according to the U.S. Code. I like that if you read the code because it makes clear to postal workers that what I've given you to deliver is not yours. It uses a word, it's an important word, it uses the word "to entrust." You've been entrusted with this communicate and you're supposed to, I like the way the code reads, you're supposed to convey it, you're supposed to carry it, and you're supposed to deliver it. That's the language of the Code.

If we send an important message, we may step it up by sending it registered mail, which is not only supposed guarantee that the communicate actually gets where it's intended, but the thing about registered mail, you might know, it helps us keep track of every step along the way. In the old days, they used to physically stamp the envelope on the back. If you've got a registered letter, on the back it would show you every single facility that handled your mail. It was stamped as though they were saying, we got it and we're passing it on and we're faithfully going to move it toward its destination. Today you can all track your registered mail online and it will send you texts or send you e-mails and show you exactly where your communicate is in the process. I think you can see where I'm going with this.

We have been entrusted with a message, way more important than any letter from some accounting firm in Irvine. I mean, this is way more important than getting some kind of a deal through the mail or from some lawyer. This comes from God, the Bible says, and it is a message that has been entrusted to us, to use the language of First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 4, "It has been entrusted to us," Paul says, "therefore, we speak." He says, "We've been entrusted with the gospel, so we speak," and then he uses this phrase, "not to please men, but to please God," and then the last four words, "who tests our hearts." God who tests our hearts knows, like a registered mail, if we've taken the communicate that comes from God and we've held on to it, if we've destroyed it, if we've tampered with it, if we delay it, God says, no, no, no, you have to take it and pass it on. You have to move this message on. In our generation, 2,000 years after Christ gave us this message, he expects every generation of Christians to take it as messengers and to deliver it, even if it doesn't please people. We deliver the message because it's what God gave us to deliver. We should feel that responsibility not to destroy it, not to detain it, and not to delay it, but to move it forward.

We've been studying in the book of Acts about the Church that was commissioned initially with this message and they were supposed to pass it on. We've gotten to Chapter 3 where we've seen this very important sign that took place where this man, who was a paraplegic, is now walking. The sign is supposed to point you to something and it's pointing to a message and the message is



delivered by two faithful postal workers. They're bringing the message and they get to a place where it's certainly not going to please men. They stand before the Sanhedrin, the council, the council of 70. Many people were jamming into this room just off the temple court. And we saw how boldly they were before that group of people saying, listen, we're telling you this is the name of Christ. Jesus is the reason this man is healed. It isn't about healing, it's about repentance. And this great sermon that we heard of Peter on the Temple Mount, now they have to answer for, and they didn't pull any punches. They said, listen, this name Jesus that you're so concerned about, "There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved," including all of you on the council.

This is an amazing roar. We saw Jesus standing before the same council and he was silent, as Isaiah 53 predicted he would be. I mean, he gave one-word answers, like a sheep before its shearers, his silence, he didn't open his mouth. I mean, it was such a difference than Peter being called into the very same court just months later and this lamb opens his mouth and roars to defend the message, to proclaim the message, to deliver the message, to not alter the message. They took notice and it was quite remarkable that these two guys, fishermen from Galilee, were able to stand here in the heart of Jerusalem, the political center, the power center of the nation, and to look the leaders in the eye and say, yeah, we're not backing down.

Pick up the story with me. If you haven't turned there yet, please do, Acts Chapter 4 verse 13. We'll try to study verses 13 through 22 this morning as we look at them saying things in response to the leaders telling them to sit down and shut up. And they say, listen, we just can't do that. Start in verse 13, when it says, "Now when they saw the boldness," and that's certainly characterized them. Right? Here are these two guys. I mean, they're younger than the crowd. They're younger and less educated. They don't have the pedigree. They don't have a formal education. But, "They saw the boldness of Peter and John, and they perceived that they were uneducated and common men," which is not to say what they said was stupid, it's not to say they were stupid. They just didn't graduate from the academies and the seminaries that all those leaders of Israel had. "And they were astonished." They were astonished because the message didn't seem to match these people. They had such power in this message and, "They recognized that they had been with Jesus." You can note the double layer of meaning there. Obviously, they say, well, these are the guys that traveled about, Jesus of Nazareth up north in Galilee. These are two of his followers. These are two of his inner circle.

But more than that, in the same way that Jesus didn't graduate from the academies and the seminaries and spoke with such authority, well, here they were standing before the powers of their generation, speaking with an unflagging uncompromising boldness.

Verse 14, "But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them." Talk about a word picture. Here is this guy who used to stand there, I'm sorry, lay there, as a beggar now standing there before the Sanhedrin with John and Peter. What could they say? They're going to castigate this guy for, you know, for the healing? They can't do that. "They had nothing to say in opposition." They were stuck. "But when they commanded them to leave the council," so these three went out, "they conferred with one another," these 70 leaders of Israel, and they said, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the



inhabitants of Jerusalem, we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." We don't want them talking about Christ.

Verse 18, "So they called them back in, and they charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.' We're not talking about the miracle of this healing of a paraplegic, this is about the Christ, the fulfillment of messianic prophecy, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The healing of this man was just a sign, a sign to point to the message. The message was about Christ. It was about forgiveness. It's about a coming kingdom, it's about having your sins forgiven. We're going to speak. We've seen it all play out.

Verse 21, "When they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people." I mean, it would be an uprising if they punish these guys for healing this crippled man. "All the people," look at it, "they were praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom the sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old," which is just a reminder that he was a fixture there on the Temple Mount. Everyone knew who he was. There was no denying it. And they thought, well, I guess we just warn them, we'll threaten them.

Peter and John standing strong with a message that they were going to be faithful to deliver, even if it didn't please everyone. It certainly didn't please the powers that be in the first-century. I'm hoping that the title of this series that we've been working through in Chapters 3 and 4 will be the kind of thing that happens in our hearts when we carry the boldness through reading and studying this passage that makes me say I got to speak. We've been entrusted with the message. They were entrusted with the message, and we need to speak because we care about the one who sent this message, the message of reconciliation to a lost world. Verses 13 and 14 remind us that it wasn't the power of the speaker. It wasn't the pedigree of the speaker. It wasn't the fact that the speakers were masters at rhetoric.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived they were uneducated," look at it again, "common man, they were astonished. They recognize they had been with Jesus." There was something about the power of their message and the double entendre of that particular phrase, "We know that the power of Christ," you could see that, you could hear that, you could sense the authority with which they spoke. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, you want a sign of power? Well, there is a sign of power. They said get up and walk to a lame man in Acts Chapter 3, and he does. And what are we going to say to that? I mean, there's a lot in favor of this message that they're speaking, even though we're going to tell them to shut up. There's certainly something here, something powerful here. The power isn't in the education or the giftedness of the speakers. The power resided in the power of the message. That's important for us to catch.

If we're going to live out the truth of First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 4, knowing that we are also entrusted with the gospel, therefore, we must speak, then we've got to speak. One reason we speak in verses 13 and 14 is because we have a powerful message. Jot that down, if you would, if



you're taking notes this morning. Number one, we "Speak Because Our Message is Powerful." You're saying, well, that would convince the people at my office if I could go and heal some guy who's in a wheelchair, and then they would think my message is powerful too. I get it. I understand. We can look at that and say, well, that's sure nifty and neat and good for them, but I don't get to do miracles. Which, by the way, I should say, as we'll say on several occasions throughout the book of Acts, I get the disparity and the difference between what was happening as the acts of the apostles are laying out and what's going to happen in our lives.

If God were somehow subjecting himself to every prayer of every Christian in every generation who's asking God to suspend natural law, we would live in a chaotic universe. Right? We would live in a crazy place. I mean, God should be expected to keep the rules that he made. The rules that he made were rules to work in this world under the laws of nature, we call them, and those laws of nature that God created, we ought to expect him to keep. He broke those laws a few times and they were all signs. As a matter of fact, this is a passage, if you don't have it memorized, jot down the reference Hebrews Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4, Hebrews 2:1-4. It reminds us that all these signs, they were exceptions to the rule. The rule is God's going to keep the rules that he makes. If the nerves are not connected between the brain and the legs and those legs are lame, they're not going to work. Those are the rules.

But God is going to reverse those rules in very select times in the Bible, less than 100, by the way, from the beginning of Genesis all the way to the end of the book of Revelation, where natural law is suspended. Most of them around the ministry of Christ and some of them around the ministry of the apostles. That takes place as a sign and sign is an important word. I've already highlighted it, but a sign points to something. It points to the veracity, the truthfulness of a message. Hebrews 1 through 4 makes this very clear and it talks about the messengers of the Old Testament law. It says that when God gave a message to Moses, which laid the established foundation of the Old Testament, he did it through the messenger of angels. Angels. That's what it means, messengers. They come to Mount Sinai and they deliver a message.

Now it says, we have a message in the New Testament through the apostles. Those who heard Christ and lived with Christ, they came and they gave us a message. Well, that's a little different than supernatural beings on Mount Sinai. So how in the world and why in the world should we listen to them and what did they do to prove it? And the text goes on to say that the message that they gave, the New Testament apostles, has been attested, has been verified, has been given us proof by the signs, miracles and wonders that were performed by the Holy Spirit through them.

So we do recognize this: that in the first century the message of the gospel was powerfully authenticated through miraculous signs and wonders. We look at that and we realized that this was the establishment of a codified message in inscripturating it in black and white, in propositional sentences so we could look at the Bible from every generation henceforth and say, well, we have a message that comes from God because God authenticated it with miracles. He's not going to do magic tricks in every generation to prove to every successive generation that what he already proved in the first century in this case has been established.



We want ongoing miracles. Well, you've got one. It's called the Bible itself, which is filled with predicted prophecies, which prove to anyone who is willing to research it that there are hundreds of prophecies that pre-date the fulfillments. Even if we just look at the fact that over a long period of time from 1445 B.C. to about 95 A.D., we have the writing of Scripture. In the writing of Scripture, we have through that period of time a number of prophecies that inarguably were codified hundreds of years before their fulfillment. Those are the kinds of things that remind us that we have a powerful message because it was powerfully attested and God proved it through the things that he did then.

But the message that I'm giving to my friends and my neighbors and I say, "Hey, you need to trust Christ," is really a promise about doing something very powerful and that is changing your status before God and making you qualified, as Paul liked to put it in Colossians Chapter 1, fully qualified "to have a share in the inheritance with the saints in light." There's something coming that we should not qualify for. It's called this kingdom, this inheritance. We shouldn't be there because we did not do enough right to be there. We are not perfect, and God cannot dwell with unrighteousness as it says in the Psalms. He cannot dwell with evil, and he starts that list with things like boasting and lying, which all of us have qualified for.

So here's the miracle, the powerful miracle of the gospel. I can say to a sinner like me, you can be fully qualified that when you die you'll hear from God "enter into the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world." You can hear, "Welcome. You're in." You don't hear "away from me, depart for me, I never knew you." You don't hear that. That's the power of the gospel. It changes your future. The problem is, there's no way for me to prove that. Right? I can't produce some kind of document or say, well, here's the certification or you'll get a card in the mail in three days and it'll be from heaven and you can prove that you have a place in the kingdom.

So I'm preaching a powerful promise and all I can do is look that it's predicated in the past with a powerful demonstration of God's power, which is not just healings of paralytics on the Temple Mount. The most repeated, oft-repeated miracle of the New Testament, is Christ's resurrection from the dead. It's what the apostles preach on more than any other topic in the book of Acts. Christ was physically, bodily resurrected from the dead. If you want a demonstration of power, as Paul said it in Romans Chapter 1 verse 4, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power by resurrection from the dead." The power of God is demonstrated in the past. I make a promise about the future, a powerful reservation and qualification in a kingdom that you don't deserve to be in because of the power demonstrated in the past.

Well, thankfully, there's something in the middle the Bible talks about a lot, too. And that is a powerful demonstration of God showing that all of this is real by giving us a demonstration of power, not to suspend natural law, but to change us from being who we were to who we are now.

The Bible says that it is a demonstration of his power. Matter of fact, the giving of the Spirit is connected with power and one of the things we see in verses 13 and 14 is two fishermen who were young, probably in their early 20s, standing before the gray beards of the leaders of the nation, willing to roar about truth that they could not refute. That's a big deal. The power of the Spirit to be witnesses in this world is just one demonstration of the power of the Spirit in



people's lives. Not to mention that we love God when we didn't, and we learned to love each other in a way we didn't before. We have all the changes that come with the miracle under the heading in doctrine called Regeneration that our lives are changed, and the Bible says you can see my power among my people because I am a God who changes people's lives now.

That may not be the magic show of suspending natural law that you want, but in a sense, it does suspend natural law because you were by nature alienated from God and now you become a friend of God. In doing so, he changes everything and we start quoting passages like Second Corinthians 5 and we say in verse 17, listen, we're new creations in Christ. "If anyone's in Christ, they are a new creature, a new creation. The old passes away and the new comes." That is a demonstration of God's power.

So think in these terms. I'm trying to get us motivated to do what Peter and John did, and you can't bring a formerly paralytic man that you healed in the hallways of Mission Hospital next to you, you know, as you go and share the gospel at the lunchroom with your co-workers. So what is the power that I bring? How do I demonstrate the power? Well, I got three buckets here. I'm promising a future power of you being qualified for a kingdom that you don't really qualify for. This is called Justification, forensic legal justification before God. It's based on the demonstration that I think if you do the homework, you can verify that God has suspended natural law in the past and he's made that clear. The power in the past. Then there's something now taking place among his people that is powerful now. You think in those three buckets you can start to say, well, I can have a little more confidence. I can be emboldened to share the gospel because I see God's power demonstrated inarguably in the past, a proclamation about something that is going to take place in the future, and I can show you some signs and evidence among the people of God as to how God powerfully changes lives.

Let me show you some examples. Turn with me, if you would, to the book of Ephesians, go to Ephesians Chapter 1. You start thinking in those three categories. All of this, I hope to help you understand that we're proclaiming a powerful message. I think it will motivate you that when you're a little timid, little scared to share the message of the gospel, when you don't feel like speaking up to point people to Christ, this might push you over the line.

Drop down in this passage, if you would. It's a prayer, you can see it starts in verse 15, but let's jump into the middle of it just to give the context of what I'm trying to highlight. Verse 19. Ephesians Chapter 1 verse 19. Are you with me on this? He speaks, I'm jumping in the middle of a sentence, in the middle of a prayer. "And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe," something on display here, power, "according to the working of his great might." Well, that's the whole point. That's what I'm trying to highlight here. What we'll see is that evidenced in three different categories: past, present and future.

So let's look at the present reality of that at the beginning of this prayer, verse 15. "For this reason," he says, "because I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I don't cease to give thanks for you." Now, let's just start with those two things right there. The Bible would say, even though you may not view it as this, the power of God is demonstrated currently because those two things, if you're a real Christian, are evident in your life. What two



things? Verse 15, "faith in the Lord Jesus and love toward all the saints." And Paul's, like, I'm totally thanking God for that. That's one of the manifestations of God's power, is that he gives you faith to believe, because according to Ephesians Chapter 2, he's going to go on to say you were, first verse, "dead in your transgressions and sins." Dead people aren't good for doing much of anything. They don't trust God very well, because to God, they're dead.

What happens is God empowers you, he gives it, as it says in Ephesians Chapter 2, he gives not only salvation as a gift, he gives faith to you as a gift. This is a powerful intrusion of your enablement to trust him. That's the power of God. All of us sit here if we have a testimony, you weren't born a Christian. You came to a place at one time. God gives you by his Spirit's power the ability to trust him. And then if you want to know something that should prove it to you now, it's this thing called love, "love toward all the saints." Non-Christians, they very selectively choose the people they love. We get thrown together in a thing called the church, even if it's a small church of 80, 100 people, or in we're in a big church, you got thousands of people. We now realize that we have the ability to love. Matter of fact, it becomes the litmus test of whether the Spirit is in your life or not.

In the book of First John, he keeps talking about that. You want to know if you're a child of God or you're still stuck as you were as a child of the devil? You want to know the difference between life, the power of God in your life through the Spirit and not having that? Well look at this. Do you love your brother? And that's a huge thing. A huge thing, particularly when it's tested by someone wronging you. The Bible says, here's the power of God's spirit in your life. You have the ability to even forgive. That's a sign of real spiritual life, that the Spirit of God enables you to forgive people, to love them, to care for them, to stretch beyond your comfort zone, to really express love in their lives. It's the difference, the Bible says, between the Spirit's power in your life and not having it.

"For this reason, because I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I don't cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in all my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you," now here's his prayer, which is true of real Christians, "the spirit of wisdom and of revelation and knowledge of him."

So now we have wisdom, we have revelation and knowledge. God opens our eyes. It's like the light for the blind, as John 9 says. I don't see the glory of God, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, but now I do. It's like the lights come on. "The spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of him." And then it says, "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened." Just think of those phrases. There is something about the Bible that happened when you became a Christian. The Bible says the Spirit of God gives you this ability to appraise spiritual things now. This book that to you before was a closed book because you read the words and you were spiritually dead to God, now comes alive and the Bible says that's a manifestation of the Spirit's power, that God now gives you this hunger for the book, gives you insight into the book. The Spirit of God allows you to see wonderful things in the law to quote the Old Testament. That's the picture of the Spirit's work. We call it in theology, the Doctrine of Illumination. We get to see things because God's Spirit is resident in it. That's manifestation here and now of the power of God.



Faith, love, Spirit that gives us wisdom and revelation. Knowledge enlightens our hearts, "That we may know," now we're going to change categories, ready, middle of verse 18, "that we may know what is the hope," that's future, "to which he's called you," that's coming, "what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints." Now that's the power we demonstrate in the message. We say to them, "You deserve to hear from God, 'Depart from me, I never knew.' You deserve to have condemnation for every sin that you've committed but instead you get to inherit this place, this inheritance of the saints." Saints, by the way, means holy ones. Guess what you're not? You're not holy. But you get that. There's the power of God in the future. When I share the gospel with someone I'm saying you can have this powerful thing that God has done that you cannot do for yourself. He has given you an inheritance. He has qualified you. He's giving you a hope. He calls it here a hope of the inheritance. He calls it in Colossians 1, he says, "You've been fully qualified for that inheritance." That's a huge thing.

Now, again, I can't prove that to you other than saying God made the promise and the promise is based on something in the past. Well, we get the statement about the power of God, "the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us," verse 19, "who believe, according to the working of his great might." Then he looks back. Here's why we can believe it, verse 20. "That he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead." You want to see that power that's now at work to give you faith and love and wisdom through the Spirit and the thing that promises you this miraculous thing called Life in the Saints, this inheritance in the saints? Well, that power was at work and was demonstrated when he raised him from the dead. That is the theme repeated over and over and over and over again. That is the number one theme in the book of Acts when they preached. It's not faith, it's not repentance, it's not the kingdom. All those things are talked about, but the thing they keep coming back to and spill more ink on in the book of Acts is the resurrection of Christ.

And as Paul said, Romans 1:4, that's where we see the power demonstrated, the authentication of God's message. How do I know I am forgiven? How do I know I get to have a share in the inheritance of the saints in light? How do I know I get my destiny changed in eternity? Well, because Christ was risen from the dead. The power that changes my status before God that gives me a sure hope in the future was evidenced in the raising of Christ from the dead. And not only that, the ascension and "seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places."

Now I know that's going to speak to what he's going to say in verse 21. We'll look at that in a minute. But I mean that all started with the ascension. That's the picture, the visible picture of Christ ascending to heaven, going into another domain, but physically being lifted off the planet, like Elijah getting lifted off of the planet. Enoch being lifted off the planet. There's the picture and Christ is the one who doesn't get lifted off to get a place in the kingdom. He goes to sit at the right hand of the majesty on high. He has all power and all authority. How much? Verse 21, "above every rule." Whoever has a rule or some kind of authority, he's above all that. Power? More power than anyone else. Dominion, the ability to lead. He's got more. It stretches endlessly. The extent of his kingdom will know no end. And "above every other name," every other authority that you might quote, he's above all that. Every name.



So there's the power. His power is transcended and it was seen through him dying and rising and then rising-rising by ascending. And those miracles we recognized were a demonstration of Christ's power that gives me the satisfaction in my heart, at least logically, to say, you trust in Christ, you'll be forgiven. If you die, yet shall you live. If you trust in Christ and you live again, then here's the thing, you'll never die. There's something coming for you that you don't deserve that's going to be so good. The unmitigated favor and blessing of God in a place that you don't deserve. I can give you the good news of the gospel because of God's demonstration of power in the past.

And what do I see now? I see stuff in the present. That rule and authority, I see it "not only in this age," look at the rest of this verse, I see it in this age, "but also in the one to come." That's the one I'm hoping for. I'm hoping for it, not with crossed fingers, I'm hoping for it with assurance, with a closed fist, like I know it's going to happen. "He put all things under his feet and gave him as," look at this now, "head over all things to the Church." That's right. Now he's head of the Church, "which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." All of us now who are God's kids, we're regenerate Christians, we have the Spirit of God in us, well that authority now is working its way out through us.

How does that do that? Well we've seen a couple of examples here in Chapter 1 in verse 15 and following that, I have faith. That's an act of the expression of the power of God's rule on this earth. I have love for my brothers. That's an expression of God's power here on earth. It's changed my heart from not loving to loving. The wisdom that comes, the knowledge and revelation that comes through the Spirit of God. All of that. All of that is in the present age. The demonstration of power, which you might blame on philosophy, you might blame on some psychological, subjective experience I'm having. But it's all predicated on something that's undeniable, the miraculous authenticating signs of Christ, primarily, and at the center of it, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. I proclaim a message about your future that's powerful, that changes everything about your future, and I do it based on the miracle of the past. Hopefully you'll see that power demonstrated through the church and the people that are filled by that God in the person of the Spirit.

If you want more on that, just keep reading. Chapter 2. It says here we were dead. Now we're alive. I mean, this is such a great text. Look at Ephesians Chapter 2. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you walked, according to the course of this world, following," now here's an important word, "the prince of the p-o-w-e-r, power of the air." There was a power here that you were all enmeshed in, "the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all lived," and we just express that, "through the passions of our flesh," carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." But here's the power of God, he changed our lives by the greatness of God, the power of God. "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us," there's power, "even when we were dead in our trespasses." Here's a real miracle, a resurrection miracle. "He made us alive together with Christ by grace," by God's favor, unearned, "he saved you -- and raised us up, and seated us with him in heavenly places in Christ." So this one that has all power, I get to be rightly connected with him, and then his power in my life gets to be demonstrated in the things that happen in my life. And I say, wow, I'm changed, I'm different. Now, as a changed, different



person like Peter and John standing before powers that could assign them to exile, he instead, Peter and John, they speak powerfully. They have a changed life.

Look at Chapter 3. Ephesians Chapter 3. Just keep going through this book. You can go all day in this. Verse 7. "Of this gospel," the good news, "I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace," I didn't deserve it, "which was given to me," now underlined it, "by the working of his power." Even being assigned and commissioned with a message to deliver it, there is power in the fact that I get to do that successfully. "To me, though," he says, "I was the very least of the saints." Right? I mean, I was persecuting the Church. "But this grace was given to me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." That's what Peter and John were doing there. When they want to in their flesh scatter because they're scared when Jesus is arrested, when Peter wants to curse and deny that even knows Christ, now he's standing before the most important people in Israel, and he's willing to share that message and to declare it firmly to his generation. That's the power of God that's at work in his life.

Drop down to the next prayer in the book, Ephesians Chapter 3 verse 14. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be," look at the power here, "strengthen with power through his Spirit in your inner being." They can attribute a lot of the change in our life to a lot of things, but the Bible says the change in our lives as God is Lord over us, as individuals in the Church, as he fills all in the body of Christ, that's the power of God working within us, and it changes who we are. "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts," that king who has all authority. I know he's not doing it on earth, and one day he will, he'll take his great power and begin to reign. But right now he "dwells in our hearts because we trust him through faith -- that you, being rooted and grounded in," the thing we weren't good at before, loving each other and certainly didn't love God, but "rooted and grounded in love, we may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge," we have understanding into the things we never could have ventured to understand as non-Christians, "that you may be filled with the fullness of God." There's power.

"Now to him," speaking of power, "who is able," empowered, enabled, "to do far more abundantly than all we can ask or think, according to the power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church." Right now, in the church, I say right now, but that was the first century. But he makes clear even to the 21st century in South Orange County, California, "in Christ Jesus through all generations." God's power is going to be at work in the present dispensation, in the present age, before the kingdom comes, the promise I'm holding out, a powerful promise that sinners will not be condemned but instead be blessed. There's the powerful message of the gospel. The power is all predicated on the past demonstration in the life of Christ that I look to in Scripture, and I see the power resident, not by breaking natural law at my whim or my prayer, but by seeing God's power present in my life through my faith, through my love, through my understanding, through my courage and boldness to do things I wouldn't otherwise do. There's the power that works within his people.



I just want you to think in those three buckets and to think, man, God demonstrated his power in the Bible, God is demonstrating his power in my life. I'm holding out the promise of a powerful transaction of the cross to change people's eternal destiny. That's a powerful message. The more you're in touch with that powerful message, the more you're emboldened to share it. A lot of us are afraid to share the gospel. We're not eager to do it because we don't sense the power of that message.

If I said we're going to L.A. We're going to meet with, you know, the upper crust or Chicago or New York. We're going to stand before the powerful people and we're going to share the gospel. They're not Christians and we need to explain this to them. You probably wouldn't be eager to do it. Paul, as he starts his letter to the Romans, the center of the power of the first century, he says, "Man, I've intended to come many times," verse 13 says, but in order..." Why? "...that I can reap a harvest among you." I want more people saved in Rome. "I'm under obligation to both Greeks and barbarians, I want to stand before everyone, "to the wise and the foolish. I am eager to preach the gospel to you in Rome." I can't wait to get there because I want to tell you about the gospel.

Now you know all that. You may not know that that precedes and butts up right up against the verse that you know most familiar from Romans Chapter 1. And that is, he says, "Because I'm not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes," the barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, foolish, wise. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel, it's the power of God unto salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Again, I think if you're still on the bubble and not sharing your faith and you don't talk to people about Christ, you need to look at this. The power of God, the power of God in the people like Peter and John preaching when they wouldn't otherwise have done it. The things happening in their life, that's the work of God in their life. In their day they've got this guy who they just healed on the Temple Mount, which just speaks to the sign of Christ's resurrection itself, so that I can hold out the message and promise of salvation to people in our generation. You need to get excited about the fact that our message is powerful and you need to speak because you've been entrusted with a message, but speak because you're entrusted with a powerful message.

Verse 15. Back to our text, Acts Chapter 4. That may have been the case, but they were going to confer together, "So what are we going to do these guys?" We can't deny the power here. The power, there's some kind of power in this. "There was a sign, a notable sign that was performed, it's evident. Everyone knows it, but in order that it may spread no further among the people." We just don't want it. If you're thinking why in the world would that happen? Go back a couple of passages. Earlier, we did a thing talking about we ought to expect opposition. We said, well, there needs to be just a realism about our thinking that they're going to oppose this naturally. Right? People don't like to be called a sinner. They don't like to be held accountable. They don't like to think that they have to submit to someone else. I mean, these are the natural oppositions of the gospel.

Well, then we said there's also a supernatural opposition to the gospel. Why don't all the people and the Sanhedrin go, "Yeah, we should follow Christ. There's obvious power here in this message." Well, they just won't. And we don't take time to preach that message, but they don't want it to be spread. So they say, verse 17, "But in order that it can spread no further among the



people, let us warn them to speak no more." Let's just tell them to stop. "No more to anyone in this name." Stop talking about Jesus. Verse 18. "So they call them and charge them not to speak or teach AT ALL in the name of Jesus." But the two fishermen from Galilee in front of all these professorial types, they answered and said, "Whether it's right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, well, you got to figure that one out." That's a big duh. Right? That's what they're saying. It's kind of a snarky way to respond. But they did. I mean, they have the truth on their side.

Not to mention the fact that Chapter 1 started with Christ personally telling them to go be my witnesses, which is not just with their lives, but with their mouths in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. "So we can't but speak of what we've seen and heard." We've seen the ministry of Christ. We've seen the death of Christ. We've seen the resurrection of Christ. We've seen the message of repentance. We've seen the whole promise of forgiveness in the coming kingdom. So here's the thing, we got to speak. I mean, if there's nothing you get out that passage, you get this clearly, I hope. We are entrusted with the message and we have to speak because God said we have to speak.

Number two. "Speak Because God Said We Must." I mean, there's no way around that. I don't know how much we try to squirm out of the clear teaching of the Bible that you and I are messengers, that we have been entrusted with a message of reconciliation to try and get people right with God in our generation. We can't try and talk our way out of this anymore. We've just got to say, God says we have to speak. It's not just the apostles. It's not just the pastors. It's not just the missionaries. It's you and me being gutsy enough to speak because you and I, First Thessalonians 2:4, have been "entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men," and clearly, it wasn't pleasing men here, "but to please God."

That's so important for us to recognize, because in our day, they're going to increasingly say more and more, you can't talk about this. Have you noticed that? Now right now, there are things on paper that tell you you can talk about this. Are you familiar with Title 7 of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act in the United States? Title 7 says that you have the right to proselytize at work. I bet you didn't know that. Probably not there in the lunchroom over the fridge. You can proselytize. You can evangelize here. But that's what the law says, but what's funny about the law is when you read that law, it says for the United States, as you work in a place of employment, you can proselytize until you can't proselytize, because here are all the reasons you can't. All it takes is your boss to say, "I think people are uncomfortable with all your proselytizing." Then your boss can say, well, you can't. And then they'll say, well, you know, Title 7 says, I'm don't have to let you talk here.

I mean, here's another one. "I don't want you to talk about Christ with the clients that you're meeting with or people in this store because if you do they'll think that that's my belief and my message." That's one of the employer's caveats that you can get out of Title 7 if you simply say this: "I don't want you to evangelize because people might think that I'm the religious nut here and I don't want them to think that." So that's one of the things that can get you out, if you're an employer, of letting your employees evangelize. If it causes any undue hardship in the workplace, I can say, well, you can't share the message of the gospel anymore. There is a long list, trust me,



you can look it up online. Title 7, Equal Employment Opportunity Act. It says you can proselytize and then it goes on to say all the 25 ways and 25 reasons your employer can say you can't.

So most people have gotten around in their workplace where they've been told they can't. Before you start quoting verses 18 and 19 and say, well, Peter and John said, you tell me I can't, but I'm going to do it anyway. I need you to recognize a few things that I said with emphasis as I read it that should be very clear to you. Let's start in verse 18. It says, "They called them and charged them not to speak or teach," here are two words I emphasized, "AT ALL in the name of Jesus. Or look at verse 17. "In order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." Now, here's the thing about working in a workplace in America today, where Title 7 says you can proselytize, you can win people to Christ, you can share the gospel. Then it says, well, here are all the reasons your employer can say you can't, and we'll support it, the government says, to where we'll enforce the fact that you can't, is that it doesn't say "at all." It says "it all" while you're under the jurisdiction of your boss or your managers or your shareholders at work.

Then guess what? At 5:01, I can on my own time share the gospel. Matter of fact, I can invite anyone I want at a workplace anywhere in the country to a baseball game and say, "Would you come to an Angels game on Friday night and I'm going to pay for it." I mean, I got the right to do it. Then I can sit there at the game and talk nonstop about nothing but Christ. I can do that. And no one's going to stop me. That's right now, at least in America, we've got the right to still do that, because there's something overarching outside of the workplace where we at least still can engage in the battle of ideas about religion, even though that's being increasingly frowned upon. We have this thing called a Constitution that still kind of stands in the way of people shutting me down at Angel Stadium.

But in the workplace, I recognize this. You're going to be shut down and people are going to say, stop talking about your Christianity at work, stop talking about Christianity with your co-workers, stop talking about Christianity with your clients. I understand it's going to happen. But I do need to remind you that the Bible would tell us that even when your masters are unreasonable, you were to submit to them. The government can be very unreasonable and yet Romans 13 says, I submit to them. Well, then, what's this all about? Well, I tried to read it carefully. Look at it again. Verse 17, bottom of the verse, "Speak no more to anyone in this name." Look at verse 18. "He charged them not to speak or teach AT ALL in the name of Christ." Now if they tell me I can't share Christ from 8 to 5, I understand that I can still share Christ with every single person in that office. Right? I can make that my mission, my prayer and my strategy, and no one can stop me from doing that at some other time of the day. During the weekends. I can do all that.

So why would this ever be employed? Well, I'm trying to underline the fact that they said, "ever, to anyone, at all, at no time, you can't do it." The Bible says in Acts Chapter 1 that the apostles were commissioned to share the message. So I can't do what my authority says, which is, in this case the Sanhedrin, and still be obedient to Christ. Let me put it this way. Maybe too many words to say it, but I can disobey the earthly authorities in my life when obeying them would necessarily make me disobedient to Christ. Now, that's a very carefully worded sentence that we



can disobey any earthly authority, we can civilly disobey them, and if you want to, I suppose as long as you do it in love, you could be as snarky as the apostles here and say, "Listen, what am I going to do, obey you or obey God?" You can use that line. That's a biblical line. When if what they're telling you, if you did it, would necessarily make you disobedient to Christ.

Now the Bible says you're a messenger. That's the whole point of this series. I say you must speak, but you may have authorities in your life say, well, you can't speak here at school during this class. You can't speak here in the office at this time. You can't speak with your clients in this particular setting in this way. I get all that and I say work around it, work around it. That's what the Bible tells us to do. As a matter of fact, a passage I want to quote, whenever we deal with these kinds of things is Matthew 10:16. He says, "I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves," but you need to be, here it comes, "be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves."

Now, here's the thing. You rebelling against your office mandate not to share the gospel is really not all that crafty. You're not being all that true. You're not being wise as a serpent. You're probably not going to end up being as innocent as a dove. You're going to be known as a kind of troublemaker about things you didn't have to make trouble about. Now, were there times in history? Are there times in this world right now where obeying authority would make you necessarily disobey Christ? Absolutely. There are places in this world right now that tell you cannot share your faith at all to anyone. I'm going to say we're going to disobey you. I'm going to say we defy you. I'm going to say, what am I supposed to do? Obey you? Because there are only two categories of authority. Ultimate authority and derived authority. There's divine authority and there's human authority. When those conflict, you see, I got to go with ultimate authority, divine authority.

In a microcosm, the picture is of my kid is on a soccer team or a baseball team, and I have a coach and the coach says, "Stay up till midnight every night." I'm going to say, "I don't care what your coach says about when you're going to bed. You're going to bed when I tell you to go to bed, you disobey your coach." And yet I've sent you to a team to obey your coach because I want you to be under the authority of your coach. But he's saying things now that are disobeying me. So you listen to me. That's how God would have us think about these rules. Sometimes we have people like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego -- Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to use their Hebrew names, were told to bow down to an idol of Nebuchadnezzar and they refused. Why? Because Exodus 20 said you cannot ever bow down to any idols. You'll have no other gods before me. You will not worship graven images and Nebuchadnezzar said, "Do it." And they said this: "Sorry, we can't and we won't."

Even the conscience of the midwives in Exodus, think about this, they were willing to say, "You want us to commit infanticide? We're not going to do it." They defied their authority. Daniel was told not to pray to any other god but Darius. But he did it anyway. Because why? Because we're supposed to pray. The Bible's clear. We have to pray. We have God who asks us to pray and you just told me not to pray. I'm going to pray. By the way, both Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and John and Peter, all willingly submitted to the consequences of defying their authority. I think that would be an important thing to highlight. I said this: even when it happened, that they probably held their wrists out and said, "You're arresting us? OK." You want



a definition in a context of the kinds of things we see in Scripture of you turning the other cheek and letting things happen to you that are bad, not in the context of self-protection, not in the context of protecting your family. A whole different set of principles in Scripture that relate specifically to that. We're talking about when you are persecuted for Christ, you endure it, you endure it, you take it.

When Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael said, "You're going to throw us in the fiery furnace?" They said, "Oh, well. You know what? Our God is able to deliver us from your hand, O Nebuchadnezzar, but even if he doesn't just know this, we're not going bow down, we're not going to do it, we have a higher authority than you." There are places in this world right now where if you obey the leaders and do what they say, you will necessarily disobey God. That is when you defy authority. And by the way, speaking of the second book of the Bible, it's called Exodus. You know why? Because they were exiting. Exiting where? They were exiting the harsh, overbearing, ungodly leadership of Egypt. There's a time at work where it may be so hostile toward your faith that you say, "Time for me to exit." And you see that, you can see that in the book of Acts. It gets so oppressive in Jerusalem in Chapter 11, it specifically says they scattered because of the persecution from Jerusalem. Moses led them out into the wilderness because he wasn't going to, of course, God directed it all, wasn't any longer going to submit himself to those evil authorities who were having their children killed. That was the picture of Exodus, of leaving.

So I'd say those three principles are important. I defy authority only and if my obedience to them disobeys necessarily God if I obey them, and I submit to the consequences, whatever they might be. And when it's wise and if it's appropriate, I might leave your jurisdiction altogether. There are people fleeing countries where they can't be obedient to Christ. There are people leaving jobs where they can't, at least wisely and shrewdly be a light for the gospel. That's a sad thing. We've had to pull people off the mission field in our church. I feel bad about that. But those leaders are going to reap what they sow when they stamp out the light of the gospel in their cultures and in their political systems.

Speak because God said we must. That may sound like a big footnote on all that, but I need to do it because this passage is quoted so often for people saying well they told me not to speak, but I'm going to do it anyway. Well, be sure you do that in the right context. The right context is when earthly authority tells me to do something that if I do it, I will necessarily disobey Christ. Be wise, as wise as slithering snakes and as innocent as doves.

Verse 21. You've got to speak. I want you to speak. You going to have to be careful and shrewd and thoughtful, strategic about that, but you going to have people in verse 21 who are going to threaten you. In this case, they had to let them go. Why? Because the people were praising God for what had happened. They found no way to punish them in this case. By the way, just hold on, because they're going to find a way to punish them soon in this book. But right now, they had no way to punish them because all these people were so excited about what Peter and John had done. Because the man on whom the sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old. So they had this guy, fixture, everyone knows him. They know he's actually lame. They probably looked at his legs up close. Everyone knows this is a miracle so I don't think we can really knuckle



down on Peter and John. I don't even think we can whip them or beat them, because if we did, people would just have our heads on a platter. So we just can't do it. But they threatened them.

Now, the tension between what happens when we share the gospel in our minds, the polarity of people who are going to either threaten us or going to praise God for what we say, I think is a good kind of lesson to learn from this last concluding section of the passage. We need to realize that that's a reality that we should just get used to seeing in our minds. Like when Paul goes in Athens in Acts 17 and he preaches. At the end of it, it says when they started hearing him speak about the resurrection of Christ, it said some of them mocked, they mocked him, they ridiculed him, and others said, we want to hear you further on this. So you're going to have people who are going to say, I'd like to know more and others are going to mock you, or in this case, threaten you or be thankful and praise God for what you're saying. That's the polarity that you should know in your mind's going to take place.

Then I would say, if I'm really trying to embolden you to speak this week, I'd like you to focus on the fact that there are some people who want to hear more. I quoted that stat from that UK survey. Remember that a couple of weeks ago? It's 19%, even in the darken culture of the U.K., said that we want to hear more about what you're saying. When an individual Christian shares the gospel with him 19% said we'd like to know more. I'd say focus on the 19%. Let that motivate you this week, even though you might have four out of five people shut the door in your face and say, we don't want to hear it, you need to keep being motivated even in your mind's eye, in your imagination saying, if I go out this week and talk to people, I need to be motivated not by the people who are going to threaten me, shut me down or tell me to shut up, but the few that are going to say, we'd like to hear you on this.

I put it this way, we're entrusted with the message so we speak. You should speak at least with this in view because of our passage, speak because there are some who will listen. Number three, "Speak Because Some Will Listen." They will. Some of you haven't shared enough to even find that out yet, because you've had three people slam the door in your face. You've had three conversations and they are not interested. I'm saying have a fourth, have a fifth, have a sixth. At some point someone is going to respond because God is not done building his Church yet.

So we need to keep speaking. We need to be motivated. We even need to be motivated by that passage we always quote when we're trying to steel ourselves and prepare ourselves for persecution. That's John 15 verse 20. John 15:20. When Jesus said this, "Remember the word I said to you," which, by the way, that preface reminds us that Jesus must have said this often. "Remember the word I said to you." I've said this a lot, "'a servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you." Now we always focus on that. "OK. I guess we're going to have persecution in this world." But the next line is the line that creates that polarity for us, and I'm saying focus on the second group. Here's what he says, this is the word. "Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A service is not above his master.' If they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you. If they kept my word, they're going to keep your word." Well, those are two different groups of people.



I'm saying this: focus on the latter. Focus on the latter and let you recognize that, though the odds here in this particular passage that we're studying, it's like a ton of people were excited. I mean, certainly not 19%. I mean, we had a really unique response to the gospel there, 5,000 men, the number had come to be in this passage. So we had a lot of positive response. But, hey, in our day, we're still going to have a positive response. It just won't be at that level. And I'm just saying get out there and keep sharing the message. "Remember the word I spoke to you." Let me focus on the latter part. "If they kept my word, they'll keep yours also." Yes, there will be people who will threaten you. But there are also people whose lives will be changed because of your message.

Look at one last passage with me, please. Luke Chapter 19. Luke Chapter 19. I want to motivate you because there are some people in your life who are going to respond like this. We learned about him in Sunday school, I guess because it's an interesting story when you're a little kid, about a little short tax collector named Zacchaeus. He's not just the tax collector. Luke 19 reminds us that he's a chief tax collector. A chief tax collector. A chief tax collector is a way to disparage someone who's not a tax collector. You just call them a chief tax collector. Because everyone knew they were all about extortion, they were greedy, they were sell-outs to Rome. They had three primary places where if you were coming in and out of Israel, you were going to get hit hard. Capernaum, Caesarea and Jericho. All those places you would be sure, like going through the port of entry, you were going to get nailed by the tax collectors. The tax collectors collect a lot of tax. They say up to 25% your income they would go after and they had authority to kind of make it up as they go. That was part of being entrusted by Rome to collect taxes. You could create this pyramid underneath you that the chief tax collectors would create and all those people, you would be skimming off of all those workers for you. So you'd sit back as the fat cat and everyone would look at you and see you as a bad guy, but you'd be rich, so that would kind of comfort you through all the nasty e-mails you'd get. I mean, that was what the tax collecting was about in the first century.

Well, Jesus is going through one of those portals in Jericho. In verse 1, Jesus enters Jericho and he's passing through. Now, of course, he's not passing through like most travelers with just two or three or four people. He's got a huge crowd with him. "And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus," verse 2. "He was a chief tax collector and was rich." That's when you hear the crowd in the first century groan. I mean it's worse than mentioning the IRS. This is really bad. He's rich. Of course he's rich. Filthy rich.

"And he," Zacchaeus, "was seeking to see who Jesus was." He'd heard the fuss. "But on account of the crowd he could not," there were so many people there, "because he was small in stature." He couldn't even jump up and look over their shoulders. Little short guy. Verse 4, "So he ran on ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree." Now you remember the story? He wanted to see Christ "who was about to pass that way." When Jesus, "verse 5," came to that place, he looked up and he said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry down. I must stay at your house today.'" Talk about an evangelist. We're having lunch and you're going to pick up the tab and we're going to talk. I mean, this is amazing. Something I want you to do. Not have them pick up the tab, you pick up the tab, but you need to start these conversations. And Jesus goes right at it. The master evangelist.

"So he hurried down," verse 6, "and received him joyfully." He's happy to do it. "And when they saw it," other people saw it, they grumbled, "they all grumbled, 'He's gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.'" Want another title with chief tax collector and rich. Well, it's sinner. He's an extortioner, opportunistic, greedy, materialistic, traitor, turncoat. Verse 8. "And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord," something you'd never expect a greedy extortioner to say, "Behold, Lord," there's a key to what's happened in his heart. I don't know what the conversation was all about, but I do know what it was about, I don't know how it all went down, but it ended with him saying, "Lord, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." A guy who worships at the altar of material success is now saying, I'm just going to give it all. I'm to cut my expenses in half. More than that, "If I've defrauded anyone of anything, I will restore it," not back to what it was, not with a little interest, not twofold, "I will restore it fourfold.

And Jesus said," bam, power of God. "Today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham," and that has nothing to do with the fact that he's Jewish. You have faith, the faith that the Bible says Abraham had, which was credited to him as righteousness. The Bible says in Romans 4, that changes your life. It forgives your sins. It is the thing that plants, from our New Testament perspective, the Spirit of God in your life and it transforms who you are. Old things pass away, new things come. It's the transformative power of the gospel. And then verse 10 says, "For the Son of Man," Jesus talking, "came to seek and save the lost."

He wasn't afraid. He had a message and he spoke. You have a message. It's your turn to speak. I want you to know that though a lot of people may threaten you, a lot of people may not like what you say, there are going to be some and you're going to hit them with the gospel and their lives are going to be transformed. You're going to look back on your life, the wake of your gospel ministry in this world, and you're going to see a few like this. Look at these. There are some who are listening. He came to seek and save the lost.

Perhaps you've heard the name Athanasius, fourth century. A man who cared about Christ. He cared about the purity of the gospel. He cared about understanding the Lord as we ought to. He cared about the people of his hometown, Alexandria, where he served in his adult life for four and a half decades. Forty-five years. I should say he served for 45 years over a 45-year span. He was exiled for 17 years. That means he was kicked out of his town and not allowed to come back. How many times? Five times he was exiled from Alexandria, Egypt. The powers that be didn't like what he said, didn't like what he was doing. Athanasius.

But he was bold. He didn't back down. Another famous early church leader, Gregory, was the one who spoke at his memorial. I want to quote a couple lines from the eulogy and I hope they're things that maybe will be said of you. Because the Lord who tests our hearts maybe is testing yours this morning through a sermon like this and it's empowering you and emboldening you to get out there and share the message. Gregory said this of Athanasius. "Athanasius was dauntless toward the powerful." I love that, no respecter of persons, didn't care who he was talking to. The whole of his life, there was a total lack of self-interest. He didn't care what happened to him, got him kicked out of town five times, for years. "The glory of God!" Gregory said of Athanasius, "and the welfare of the church absorbed him fully at all times. Emperors recognized him as a force of the first order." He was engaged in a battle of ideas. He goes on to say, "But on no occasion did he



yield to the temptation of using the arm of flesh." It wasn't about him being in politics, wasn't about him trying to sit there and this for that, he was just about the message of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ and proclaiming the truth of the gospel. I love this last line. "Courage, self-sacrifice, steadiness of purpose were all harmonized by the discipline of single-minded love for Christ."

I know a sermon like this can feel a lot like duty. Look at the statements. Right? Speak because our message is powerful. Speak because God said we must. Speak because some will listen. Go, go, go, go, go. But I hope behind everything that I say, even if it is a command, an expressed command of Scripture, we do it because we love God. We love Christ. Christ has given us a message. Why do we want to be faithful? Well, I want to be faithful because we're supposed to, we have a trust. I get that. And Paul says that, First Thessalonians 2:4, but we're faithful to deliver the message because we love the one who sends it. I love those three words: courage, sacrifice, steadfastness of purpose. I hope you can be purposeful of taking the message of the gospel to our generation. Don't destroy the message. Don't detain the message. Don't delay the message. Get it into someone's heart and mind this week.

Let's pray. God, help us the end of this weekend to consider our job this week. Think through the people who we interact with, we talk to. People who we care about and to be able to share with them with a new emboldened purpose, the message of the gospel. God, give us that steadfastness of purpose to exalt Christ in our workplace, in our neighborhoods and our families. Do that, Lord, for your glory, for the sake of your Church, for the good of the exaltation of Christ. Make us bold. Make us brave. Build this church, this particular church numerically, just as we saw in the book of Acts, not for the glory of this particular outpost of the Church, but because we're called to be faithful messengers of the gospel. So God help us to keep speaking this week and let it glorify you.

In Jesus name. Amen.