



## **Pointing People to Christ – Part 9**

### **Enjoying God's Growing Family**

Pastor Mike Fabarez

They're building a six billion dollar stadium up there in L.A., as I'm sure you've heard. One part of that stadium I know is going to be really nice is the locker rooms. They don't even call it that. They call it the clubhouse. That's where the professional athletes hang out and prepare. It's where they change, of course. That's where they come back to during halftime. Matter of fact, if you go to any major stadium around the country and you get a chance to tour that stadium, be sure to get to those clubhouses within those stadiums. They are very nice. Matter of fact, even in college sports, the college arenas around the country, they're cherry'd out. They have wood paneling. They've got obviously climate control. A lot of free food flowing around there. It's a nice place to hang out. I guess that's a good thing because you hang out there just before you go out onto the field, and it's not quite as tranquil there out on the field. It's a respite. It's meant to be that. I mean, leather chairs, comfortable place. You get a little bit of that recharging that you need to get back out into the battle.

In the book of Acts there has been from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4, a lot of battling going on. As a matter fact, the section that we are finishing up today as we get to the end of Chapter 4 has been a section that began with an opportunity for the apostles to preach the gospel. As Peter stands up and the record of his preaching is there, he doesn't pull any punches. As a matter of fact, he goes all in in trying to make sure that the people know this is no optional thing. We're not presenting you some kind of self-help improvement. This is like heaven and hell. Life and death. You need to respond rightly to the God who has created you and sent his Son to redeem you and to have you forgiven from your sins. This is essential.

Well, the authorities didn't like that. Of course, what we saw there and this all started in Chapter 3, and I should say that's where the record of his preaching is. Then in Chapter 3 and 4, we see all the opposition to this. The council that actually turned Jesus over to the Romans to have him crucified now is calling Peter and John before them and they're telling them, "You've got to stop. You cannot keep preaching in the name of Jesus." And of course, you might remember their response as uneducated fisherman from Galilee with an accent and a twang in their voice, here they were with courage and boldness, standing up to the authorities and the highest court in the land for them as Jewish people and they were saying, "Listen, you might tell us to be quiet, but we can't be quiet. You may tell us that we've got to stop preaching, but we can't." And then that great line here in Chapter 4 where it says, "There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." We're going to preach this message and they engaged in that battle of ideas, as Second Corinthians 10 says. This argumentation, that's a lot like warfare, saying to our culture, Christianity is not an option. It's mandatory. It's an imperative. It's not an offer. It's a command that we submit to the Lord Jesus Christ because it's the only hope that we have. "There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." This is critical and urgent.



In that battle, as they're incarcerated and they're threatened, they go back to the church as they're gathered together in the verses just proceeding where we've reached at the end of Chapter 4, and they pray together for boldness. They ask God to enrich them with a kind of strength and courage to have this emboldened, strong, courageous, faith-filled attitude that they're going to get into the marketplace every day, they're going to go into their secular jobs and their relationships, and they're going to do whatever they can to be a good and faithful ambassador for Jesus Christ. That is the church that we left last time we studied this passage together.

Then in verse 32, as though we've gone from the stern coaching in that locker room as they're gathered together, they had been praying for Peter and John, and now you kind of get the camera that's panning around this clubhouse and you get to see how nice it is in there. You get to see how comfortable these leather-padded chairs are and the paneling on the walls and and the climate control and the free cashews and the bananas and oranges that are there. All of this is just around and you get this sense of what an oasis this must be.

Now, the rest of the book of Acts we're going to it back on the gridiron, through the tunnel, back onto the field and to fight for the gospel. But right here in these verses, verses 32 through 37, you get a picture of how nice it must be to be a part of this harbor, this safe haven, this oasis in the midst of the battle. It's one that every generation of Christian must have, and you and I must have one and we've got to have it here. It's the Church of Jesus Christ. If it's not an oasis, if the harbor is choppy, if there's a storm and turbulence here, we have no hope really to go down that corridor and out on the field and fight for the gospel Monday through Friday. We've got to have a church that functions like this church. It's the difference between us hearing at the end of our lives, "Well done, good and faithful servant," or those who unfortunately were so embittered and embattled in our churches that we never got out there empowered and emboldened to do the work that God has called us to do.

So we must study these verses. Acts Chapter 4, written by Luke, Acts Chapter 4 verses 32 through 37 with an eye that we might replicate this in our church. But even before we kind of lay that emphasis on us, I want to step back and say, isn't it good to the extent that we experience it to have this experience, just like they had? At least to whatever level we say, "Yeah, I can identify with that. I've been in the church long enough to know with all of its warts and wrinkles there are a lot of good that's happening in the church and there are a lot of things we need to think about and consider and highlight to make sure that we appreciate the church for what it is. Then we can end with a little bit of a push to say how can we make sure it stays that way and maybe even in our case, improve and get a little bit better.

So take a look at this text with me. It's an important one. Acts Chapter 4. Look at it with your own eyeballs, please. Acts Chapter 4 verses 32 through 37. I'm going to read it from the English Standard Version as we return to this great book in this great chapter, taking a little look around as the camera pans around and looks at the safe haven, the harbor, the good respite from the battle and the war, the shelter, the refuge and oasis that the church ought to be. Verse 32.



"Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the feet of the apostles, and it was distributed to each as any had need." Verse 36. "Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

I want us to start at the bottom of verse 33, just as we look at these first two verses. I want to see that last line and then I want to go back and see why this statement can be said truthfully of the early church. Look at that last line. So important, even the prepositions that help us see this kind of imagery, this analogy. I want you to kind of personalize and objectify even this virtue, this great thing called grace that it says in this text was set upon the Church. It says at the bottom of verse 33, "And great grace was upon them all," this corporate group of people. And remember, when you start in verse 32 with this statement, the "full number," we've gone from 3,000, we've gone from 120 to 3,000, and now in Chapter 4, we've learned that there are 5,000 men, heads of household. So this is a big megachurch that's meeting on the vast environs of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in the first century to gather together, to sit under the preaching of the apostles.

So this is a big group and yet that whole group, there was something that the Bible says was set upon them. Great grace was set upon them. I think it's helpful for us to stand back and to think of that in our case, because we as a church representing the same Christ who was represented by that group there in the first century is what we are living for, what we stand for. We're ambassadors of the same message in our generation. And so it'd be good for us, number one on your outlines, if you're taking notes, jot this down, "To Think of the Favor That Is Set On God's Team." It's important for us to see that. We have the higher ups, so to speak, in this team, and if you have a jersey with your name on the back of it and you're on the team, you're on Team Christ, if you will, there is a blessing that has been set, a favor, a goodness, the grace that had been set on this team. It's good for us to revel in that for a minute and stand back and go that's a good thing, that's a big thing. That's a big statement.

It's a big statement that distinguishes us and differentiates us from any other group. You might be a part of a lot of things, a business association, some kind of club, some kind of hobby, you know, alliance or whatever. Your kids might be in Little League or in Boy Scouts or whatever they're a part of. But there's no organization like this one that the Bible says right here, we see within the church a special distinction of God's grace being on them all. That's true not only of us in the church, it was true in the Old Testament. When I start thinking about the preposition of setting this love and this grace upon a group of people, I think of the Old Testament statement that I have to have you look at, because the logic here is helpful and the parallels are clear to the New Testament Church and therefore to us.



So turn with me to Deuteronomy Chapter 7. I want you to look at this passage in light of the fact that it's true also of the Church of Jesus Christ. Of course, the Church did not replace Israel, but the Church certainly, just like a called out group of people in the New Testament, can be looked at in parallel to the called out group of people in the Old Testament. The book of Deuteronomy, of course, was written there in 1440 B.C. coming out of the land of Egypt, Moses had led them out and the retelling of the law, the re-speaking of the law to a new generation. That's what Deuteronomy means, second law, the second giving of the law. You have in this setting an important reminder that the people who were about to enter the land of Canaan, that had come out of the land of Egypt, they were special to God. And look at this statement as it relates to who the people of Israel should view themselves to be, starting in verse number 6. Deuteronomy Chapter 7, verse 6.

Moses is the mouthpiece for this truth, and he says, "For you are a people," now look at this phrase, "holy to the Lord," holy to the Lord. You think of the word holy. I don't know what you think of. You probably think of a set of moral standards and it is true that oftentimes the Bible speaks of holiness in terms of reflecting the character of the God who has set you apart. But the word itself means to be "set apart." The word holy means that you're not like the rest. He has taken you and distinguished you from the rest. You are a people, this group of people, Israel here, is set apart or "holy to the Lord, your God." And therefore that's why we should in our behavior reflect the one who has set us apart. And therefore it takes on an ethical or moral character so often in the Bible. But at its base, the idea of what it means to be holy means you are a group of people who is set apart, different.

Look at the rest of this verse, verse 6. "The Lord your God has chosen you," well, there's a thought, "to be a people for his," now you get the sense of the completeness of this idea, "a treasured possession." You're mine. This is my group. This is my people. This is my team. "Out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth." Right? I mean, God's taken individuals and called them out and put them in this group. Now, of course, that providentially happened through genetics, primarily, you've got the descendants of Abraham. God made a promise to Abraham 2,000 years before Christ came. This here is 600 years later as Moses is reminding them that you are a group of people descended from Abraham and God has chosen you as a treasured possession. This is his group, his team.

Now, why would he do that? Verse 7. "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you." There's that preposition. I can't help but think of Deuteronomy 7, his love set upon those people, just like it says in the New Testament Church, his grace was set upon the people, all the people. "His grace was upon them all." And here it is, the picture of God's love. He loved you, he set his love on you. Now, why did he do that? Well not because you were the biggest group around. Matter of fact, when he started this thing, we had an infertile couple named Abram and Sarai, and they could even have any kids. What kind of nation is that? Well, God doesn't pick them because they were the most. It's not because you were the most. Matter of fact, you were the fewest of all people.



Well, then why did you choose us? Why did you set your love on us? Why did your favor rest upon this group of people? Verse 8. "It is because the Lord loves you." Well, that's kind of circular reasoning there. I'm asking, "Why do you love us? Why do you just set..." Well, because I do. Right? I mean, that helps us understand something of, we use the word all the time, the sovereignty of God. God decides to love these people. He sets his love on these people. But then he gives us a little bit of an explanation. He says, "Keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers," to your patriarchs. Who are they? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the patriarchs in the book of Genesis. God makes a promise to Abraham, he reiterates it to successive patriarchs, so "the fathers."

So 600 years before Moses writes this, he says, well, God has set his love on you. And he did that pulling you out of Egypt. And he's going to bring you into the Promised Land. And he's doing that because he's keeping a promise that he made to Abraham so long ago. So that's helpful, I suppose. He swore an oath to the fathers, to your fathers. That's why he's "brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God." He's in charge. He's the king. He's a faithful God. "He keeps covenant," he keeps his promise, "and steadfast love." There's our word we see a lot in the Old Testament, his Hessed, his consistent, faithful, loyal love "with those who love him and keep his commandments."

That's a great reminder that God sets his love on people, not because of the virtue or loveability of those people. He doesn't set his grace on us because he goes, "Well this is the best group of people I could find on earth. I'm going to set my grace on them." But if you're part of the Church, you're part of an organization that God has set his grace upon, the grace upon the organization.

And it's not because he's keeping a promise in this case to our biological forefathers, but because the parallel, you might want to take the note down at least, in Ephesians Chapter 1, he makes it so clear that he's keeping a promise to his own Son. "You've been chosen in him from the foundation of the world," chosen in Christ. God said, I'm going to pull a bunch of people together from every tongue, tribe and nation. They're going to come, this eclectic group of Gentiles, and he's going to pull them together in a thing called the Church. He's going to set his love on them because he's keeping a promise to his Son. Jesus Christ, think back to the picture of him as a shepherd, comes to shepherd a group of people and the Bible says that the people in his flock that he shepherds are a gift from the Father to the Son. He gives him this group of people, as John 10 says. And he says, those people are going to "hear your voice and they're going to follow you." And then you're going to be their shepherd. And as Jesus is saying all this, he says, "And no one can snatch them out of my hand." They will be my treasured possession, to use the words of Deuteronomy 7.

Let's step out of that for a second and just think of what we're saying. We have an organization here. It's unlike any other organization. There's something divinely unique and profound about the Church of Jesus Christ. And if you are a part of this church, I don't mean filling out a form or having some kind of file in a file cabinet. I mean you say, this is my church. This is my organization. I, like these people, are followers and disciples of Christ. We





organize, as Christ told us, under the elders and the deacons of the church. We together here are one outpost of the body of Christ. This is his organization. He sets his grace, his blessing, his love upon this group.

That is a privileged place to be. And even if you're not a Christian, but this is a regular part of your life, Compass Bible Church, this one outpost of the body of Christ, much like we distinguished between the weeds and the wheat, the old translation's the "wheat and the tares," even if you associate with us regularly, you might be a non-Christian in hear one day at the end of your life, "Depart from me. I never knew you." And that would be a horrible thing, especially with all the responsibility you'll have for the knowledge you learned while you were here. But even if you're just part of the weeds and not the real possessing true converted Christian, as the book of Hebrews says, you need to understand there are so many temporal blessings that are bestowed on you simply for being part of the church.

God's grace is set upon this organization with all the warts and wrinkles that we have, just like there was in the early church. God says, these are my people. Here is my grace. My love is set on this organization, a parallel to, it would be First Corinthians 7, when God looks at marriages and said even if there's only one converted person in that household, that whole thing is set apart. He uses the same equivalent word in Greek, "Hagios." This group is set apart. God sees that family, that household, differently because his favor is set on that household even if there's conflict and we have Christian and non-Christian. It's one of the arguments as to why you shouldn't be quick to divorce your non-Christian spouse and that you shouldn't do it because there is a sense of grace that comes upon that family and even upon your children because of one believing person in that household.

Well, this is so different, the church. How many people do we have here who are the real deal? Right? Real wheat, if you will. They're not the weeds. They're not the tares. I don't know what the percentage is. Of course, I'm always hoping the percentages will go way up. I would be great if 99% of us were all genuine believers. But even if it was 70%, even if it were 60%, even if we have in our church 60% of the people who are saved and 40% who are just going along and dragged the church because someone told them to come. This is just the regular thing. Of course, they listen to sermons from Pastor Mike. And they hear the worship and their kids go to Awana or whatever. Even you guys are going to be a part of an organization unlike any other organization you could ever associate with on earth. And I don't suggest that you become a fake, a phony. But even if you were, the book of Hebrews says the splashing of God's favor on this organization is a blessing in your life in so many ways. In so many ways.

Let's work our way backwards through this text. Here's the first way. Look at the bottom of verse 33. Back to Acts Chapter 4. It says, "And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all."

One of the things, as Hebrews 6 talks about, there's something about the preaching of this ancient book called the Bible that becomes an organic, if I can use that word, blessing to the people who hear it. And I say preaching, because when you read the phrase "they gave testimony of the resurrection of Jesus," it wasn't just they got up every time they had a chance



to speak. Right? And there was thousands of people there. And not just Peter every time going, "Well, you know, I saw Jesus, he rose from the dead, you know. We can all testify Jesus rose from the dead." This isn't a singular note, right? He's not just saying the same thing every time. The point is the implication, this is a moniker, a place holder. Some kind of rubric that sets above a whole body and a corpus of information that's being shared.

In other words, we're serving a risen Christ. We don't follow a dead poet. We don't follow some deceased philosopher. We're not just gathering around studying someone who is really influential from history. We are trying to direct in every preaching of every passage and every testimony of every sermon, we're trying to preach about a living Christ who is alive today and has a kingdom that he's bringing and he's going to come back and reign on the earth and it's all because of a resurrected Christ. That testimony of the apostles is described as great. Look at the word. It says "great power."

We're not talking about miracles here. Were there miracles going on through the apostles? Sure. First Corinthians 12:12 talks about it. Our passage in Chapter 4 talks about it. We'll see more in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. But that's not the focus here. When we talk about great power, we're talking about the actual act of preaching, that act of preaching. We're just building some sub-points here under number one. The blessing of God, the love of God, the grace of God set on the Church, one of the avenues through which he blesses that group is through preaching. That preaching that is brought is a preaching of a book that the Bible says is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and it pierces through to the heart, divides bone and marrow, the interior of bones. It takes our thoughts and intentions and it divides those up."

I mean, you can listen to TED talks. You can go to universities and listen to lectures in lecture halls. But there's something different about the preaching of the Bible. The preaching of God's Word. It changes lives. Matter of fact, here's how it's put in First Thessalonians Chapter 1 when Paul talks about the great power with which his preaching came to Thessalonica, he said it "came with the power of the Holy Spirit in full conviction." That's the point. When the Bible is taught and it's taught clearly by leaders who are gifted to teach that book, it does something in the interior of people's lives and it starts, and is a good word, with conviction. And that conviction then transforms people's lives.

And I'll tell you what, even non-Christians have kind of the spillover of the effect of the preaching of God's Word that restrains sin and it prompts a different kind of life. But the most important is when you have a living heart, like a newborn baby, Peter put it, it craves the pure milk of the Word. As Hebrews Chapter 5 says, you have then even a growing appetite, not just for milk, but for meat. In the preaching of that book, unlike any other organization, a guy stands up and speaks for 45 minutes to an hour from an old book, and that teaching, that preaching, that testifying to the resurrected Christ and all that goes with it transforms the whole direction of our lives.

Your life is different because of preaching and God's Word nourishes your life, the Bible says, like food to a baby because of the accurate, powerful preaching of the Word that brings



conviction to your life. God's favor is set on people and it's set on people as often, as the Puritans used to say, through the means of grace of exposition, the preaching of the Word. It's an avenue through which God blesses his church.

Verse 32 to work our way backwards through this. I said it started with this idea of a big group of people, "full number," we know it's probably 10,000 people at a minimum, "who believed were," and here's the description, "of one heart and soul." With one heart and soul.

It's one thing to join an exercise group or to be a part of some hobbyist group or some alliance for business. You can share the things that that group talks about and you can say, "Well, I'm in agreement with that. I like the nutrition that they promote. And I'm into that thing." There's nothing that's whole life through and through from the interior to the exterior of our life that affects a person like biblical Christianity. In other words, there's something about the unity of not just our aspect of our life, some pie shaped wedge of our life, but really it's about our hearts and souls being directed in the right way. I'm careful with the word "soul" because that word soul was not a word that is consistently used in the New Testament. Matter of fact, sometimes it's used, I think, with a reminder of the way it's used in classical Greek, to talk about something interior in my life that's more than just heart. Heart is used often to describe the thing that changes when we become Christians. The interior control center of our lives, not just the seat of our emotions, but the seat of our values and our priorities and how we think.

The Bible says you got old hearts here that are dead to God, but they become alive. That was the promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31. If I have a new heart and you have a new heart, then something on the interior of my life is changed and something on the interior of your life has changed. And that's true. We can say we have one heart because we're all trying now to move toward the same things to be conformed to the image of Christ. I mean, that's a big thing. That means we're on the same path in so many ways, not just one area of our life. Then it says of one's soul. And I say that because in the exterior of the Greek language, at this particular point, exterior from biblical language, I mean, it's Koinonia Greek, but in attic Greek and ancient Greek, the way that word "soul" was used so often had to do with people in corporate settings.

Plato, for instance, in writing the Republic, uses the phrase as he talks about an utopian society, an idealized republic where the people in that group have one soul, their soul is knit together, is unified. Because of that, they create something that's a perfect community, a perfect society, because they have that same interior set of impulses. So he uses this phrase, he enlists this phrase, and it gets down even to the closest and most intimate things in our lives.

Aristotle talked about friendship. He said friendship, this is a phrase that's made its way down to our English discussions and idioms. Friendship, he says real friendship is two bodies and one soul. When people have one soul and they live in two different bodies. They have something that knits them together in the interior of their lives, that creates a kind of bond that you call real, at least the way Aristotle talked about it, real friendship. And even think the





highly educated Dr. Luke using this phrase in this way, very strongly stated in this text, "Kardia" is first, "heart" is first, and then it "Psych," "soul" is next. And then it ends with the strong "was one." Their hearts were converted to God and their soul, their friendship. So they were one. There was something deep there.

So when I think about God's favor and his love resting on his people, he nourishes his people through the powerful preaching of the Word. That's the centerpiece of gathering together. But then what happens, we sometimes call it fellowship, is that there's a sense of oneness and profound friendship and community that takes place here. That these relationships become so significant and central in our lives that Jesus says it trumps even our biological relationships. He looks around at those people who are his disciples, knit together in heart and soul, if you will, and he says, "Who are my mothers and brothers?" Right? "Here they are. They're right here." When his physical biological mother and brothers were standing outside saying they want to talk to you, he says right here, this is my family. A family that is closer to me, he says, because we share the same heart, that it's as though, like they said in secular Greek, we have the same soul. Real profound relationships.

You can have connections and friendships in a lot of different circles. But the Bible says that in the church, the blessing of God is when you have the kinds of profound heart to heart, soul to soul relationships that you have, I hope you have, in your small groups, in your sub-congregations and even those you see from week to week in large assemblies like this that you have a sense of here's the real connection. The thing that I'm made for, I'm made for friendship, I'm made for relationship, and God gives us that sense within the church.

You should stand back and say, wow, God's favor is set on his team. Here is his team, we go into the locker room. I hope we can recognize how great it is when the coach gets up and talks and there's transformation in our lives. So God is connecting with us through preaching. Then our relationships as we turn to each other wearing the same jersey before we go out there where there's all the opponents, we have the most profound and tight, significant, nourishing relationships going on with one another.

Here's the third blessing. But I want to tease that out from the outline, if you'd let me, because the rest of the passage actually unpacks it this way. There's the bottom of verse 32. Because verses 34 through 37 expand on it all, let's just make this the second point of the outline and know in detail, we'll see it in verses 34 and 35. But look at the bottom of verse 32. It says, "Now no one said of anything, any of the things that belong to him that it was his own." They didn't say, "Hey, that's mine, that's mine, that's mine." "But they had everything in common." Verse 34, further, "There's not a needy person among them," I guess if everyone thought that way, there wouldn't be, "for as many as were owners of lands and houses they sold them and they brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." And then we get a superstar here that's pulled out and set on a platform and the light was shined on him, and that's Joseph they called Barnabas.

But let's just look at that concept there. This concept of people in a big church that you had a sense in which, you know what, there's commonality among us. Matter of fact, that word

"common" there, you might want to star that or highlight it and bracket it and know the underlying Greek word, because you've heard it many times. It's the Greek word, "Koinonia." Koinonia. The idea of koinonia, we usually think of, if you were to translate that, you'd say, "Well, I think that's fellowship isn't it? Isn't that the word for fellowship?" It is. It's translated that way sometimes, but most commonly it's translated, pardon the pun, "common." Matter of fact, we get words like "commune" from that, from the word koinonia, and we get the word "communism" from that. Matter of fact, some people have pointed to this passage that says, "Wow, that looks a lot like communism." Well, you're not reading the text carefully if you want to find communism in this passage.

A couple of things I want to note just by way of making a distinction. That is that when it comes to a passage like this where you see the word koinonia, commonality, it's not as though I'm looking at your stuff and saying I have a right to your stuff. As a matter of fact, look at what's said in verse 32 again, "the things that belonged to him." In other words, if I have something and I own it, I got the pink slip on my car, I've got the deed on my house. This is my house. My car. Now, these are things that I can, from my perspective, being one heart, one soul, I can look and say, you know what? "My stuff is yours, my house is your house. You need a car? You know what, it just you can have my car and drive it as though it were your car." You can have that perspective. It still belongs to me.

See communism and communal living often flips that around and says, "Wait a minute, your car?" Especially if you're driving that nice car. "Your car's my car and your house," especially if you live over there, "your house is my house." In other words, the demand that you give up your stuff and I get to treat it like my stuff is not what this passage is saying. The arrow is in the other direction. You follow that, right? It's the person who willingly, voluntarily, generously says, hey, "Mi casa, su casa." "My house, your house." It's not that I can drive by your house and go, "Hey, well then your house is my house." I don't get the right to say that.

I know that because throughout the Scripture, the concept, the principle, the ideal and the right of private property and ownership is replete throughout the Scripture. It's before this verse all throughout the Old Testament and it's after this verse. Matter of fact, it's right after this verse in Chapter 5, when Ananias and Sapphira try to follow suit and do what Barnabas did. They lie about it. We'll see this next time, Lord willing. And what happens? They get in big trouble with God. But in being confronted by Peter, Peter goes, "Well, that property before you sold it, was it not yours to do whatever you wanted with it? And then when you liquidated it, that asset, weren't the proceeds yours? You could do whatever you want?" Of course it was. So we believe in private property. We believe in private ownership. But that's not the point here. The point is, people were so moved because of one heart and one soul to be generous with their stuff that they willingly and voluntarily gave that as needed. They laid it at the apostles' feet.

Which, by the way, is an interesting thing as well, because landowners was something that Peter James and John didn't know much about. Right? Matthew might have known something about it, but the fisherman in Matthew 19, said to Jesus, "Hey, we don't have any houses. Matter of fact, we've left everything to follow. We left our nets and our, you know, our



Galilean, twangy fishing business. We left that all behind." The rich young ruler, he's got land. We don't have land. Here were these guys who just by virtue of them being shepherds in the flock, that they are teachers and those who preach the Bible and christological truths to them every week, those are people who now are given this fiduciary responsibility as rich people with their real estate are liquidating that and laying it at the feet of a bunch of, in this case, most of them Galilean fisherman.

Now, this is an amazing thing so that they then could, in their fiduciary responsibility, broker that stuff as was needed. Nevertheless, I want to step back, much like we did with the first point and say, isn't it great to be a part of a place where God's favor rests upon it through a couple of things. Preaching and the kind of the unity that exists as we all have interior lives that are pulling in the same direction. Well, what about this now? I want you to think about how good it is to be a part of an organization where the resources, because of generous people, are pooled together and if there is a need, it's met corporately in that family.

Let's just change the analogy from team to family. Let's write it down this way if you're taking notes. We need to "Consider the Security of God's Family." There's another asset you have if your part of the church. You have security because you know that in that church, there are generous Christians knit together with heart and soul and that they give to the corporate entity here. In that entity, that church that's laid at the feet of a bunch of theological eggheads that lead the church, the budgetary issues now can be given as needed so that there's no one needy in the church.

I don't know how times I've had this discussion with people. They lose their job. I had one recently. A terrible situation. It's great to look across the desk and say, you know what? It's a good thing you're part of the church. Your neighbor, in your scenario, in the middle of a crisis like we're going through, I mean, they might have something to worry about. But the good thing is you're an integral part of our church. You have nothing to worry about. As King David said in the Old Testament, "I've never seen the righteous begging for bread." Right? You're not going to live under an underpass. Why? Because you're part of the body of Christ.

You're not just a part of a team. It's not like we're in the locker room. You go to your house and you deal with all that domestic stuff, and, you know, we never have an interest in that. We just come back tomorrow for workouts and the pre-game and then we'll go out and fight together. No, we're a family. This is a big deal here. We care for each other. If there's a need, it's met. Therefore, no one is needy among them. And that's the way it ought to be. Someone loses their husband, a widow, some widower loses his wife. Some terrible situation happens to a young person, loses their parents. I mean, being part of the church, we recognize, I mean, when it comes to at least the practical temporal issues of life, well, you got a security no one else has. You're not going to get that from the Boy Scouts or the Kiwanis Clubs or the Elks Lodge. You're going to get that from the church. In the church you're going to have that kind of connection.

Is there abuse? Of course there is. Matter of fact, you read your Daily Bible Reading this morning I assume. In the pastoral epistles, Paul has to say, "Well, wait a minute. I know a lot



of people can come and just say, 'Well, great, I'm a part of the church. I got a great social security here. Matter of fact, I don't really have to worry about things. Matter of fact, if I run into a problem, like become a widow, I just know I'm going to go on the payroll of the church.'" Even in that, he says in First Timothy 5 we read this morning, he says, "Well, wait a minute. They're going to be stipulations." Are you going to have the policies in place? Sure. Is there vetting? Of course. Well how about when he writes the Thessalonians he says, "Well, you know, because of this kind of generosity corporately, some people just say, 'So I just going to give up on working then. I'm just going to be a busybody. I don't need to get a job. It's fine, I'm a part of the church.'"

Now security can be abused. I understand that. But I want you to think today about the fact that if you're part of a church, you're part of a place where God's favor rests on it. Not only is there unity, I hope, and a nourishment through preaching, but there's a security, a kind of commitment that that church has that we're not going to have a need. I've illustrated this way many times, that if I'm during this sermon, after I walk off the platform, I find out my house has burned down. I've got no place for me, my wife and my daughter to sleep tonight. I bet I got a few spare bedrooms that I'm going to be able to use. I bet I got a shower, I bet there's a bottle of shampoo somewhere we can shampoo our hair that I don't have to go to Costco or Target and buy today. Right? Am I right? I mean, I've got that. And you've got it, too.

Matter of fact, if we had someone orphaned, if we had someone widowed, if we had,... it doesn't matter what the situation, the body of Christ steps up and meets those needs. And that's an amazing thing that you have. The world does not have that, you understand that. It is not that way beyond these walls. It's that way here. And it's important for us to say, well, that's a great, great, great, great thing. And so it is. It's something that should be distinguished from communism, it's not a demand and it's not a conscription. It's not a demanding of your things. It's just being a part of the body of Christ. As we move forward in this life with a lot of uncertainties externally, hopefully something will let you put your head on your pillow at night and say, "I have got a family."

Just like my kids don't worry about whether I paid the car insurance. Right? When my kids were little, get in the car and off we go. So we worry about the issues that are important to the mission of the Church and the practical issues are cared for. "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you," and the means by which they're often added to you as the pagans chase after what they're going to eat, what they're going to wear, where they're going to live, all of that I'm recognizing is something that is given through the means of the local churches that God was going to set up all over the world.

Number three, verses 36 and 37. We've got Joseph, who we learn is nicknamed Barnabas, which then Luke writes to the Theophilus in a parenthetical statement here, which means son of encouragement. Well, I don't know. Just for fun, as long as you're a Bible student, if you want to kind of get a little more specific on this, let's unpack this. Barnabas is a compound word. Anytime we see the word "bar" in a Hebrew word, and this is obviously Hebrew transliteration from a Hebrew background, we learned he's a Levite from the tribe of Levi. "Bar" means son like "bar mitzvah." Right? Son. "Nabi." You might know that word as we've

talked about various things in bibliology and the idea of God sending his prophets. Nabi means prophet or mouthpiece. Nabbi, right? Form of the Hebrew word nabi, "bar nabi." Let's just call it that. Barnabi is "son of the prophet." And it's not that his dad was a prophet. That's not the point. It's that much like they would say in the Old Testament, here's an old phrase, we don't see it translated directly anymore in most translations. But son of "Beel", you ever heard that? Son of Beel? Beel, like Beelzebub is Satan, right? The translation of that, usually in English texts, is a worthless person, a worthless person. Because beel is worthless. He had a job. He didn't do it. He abandoned it, he absconded with, you know, other angels. And then he's a worthless person. He's worse than a worthless person. He's a counterproductive person. In that case, if you're a son of beel, it's translated in the English Standard Version at least consistently, "worthless person."

When you say son of nabi, a son of a prophet, a prophet does a couple of things, two distinctive things. Right? He brings comfort, like in the book of Jeremiah that we're reading in our Daily Bible Reading in the mornings. and when there's need for comfort. Then before we got all the comfort of Jeremiah, there was a lot of strong exhortation and correction that comes through the prophet. Well, that's helpful even in the next phrase, and if we were reading now in Greek, you would see this next phrase, Mooche means "son of encouragement." Now, again, that seems very one dimensional for us, as though nabi you would often think about prophet, you would think about someone strongly exhorting you to do the right thing.

Encouragement translates the Greek word "parakletos." Now I know you know that word, right? We talk about it a lot. Compound word in Greek. The second part of this "Kaleo" is the verb "to call," comes from the verb to call. And the first part is a preposition "para," parakletos. A para is "alongside of" or "next to." I often illustrate it, I'm sorry, ad nauseam, I illustrate it this way. It's like if your knee is wobbling or injured, right? You've got some knee issues. You bring in a brace alongside of it, its called in alongside of your knee joint and it supports you. That's parakletos. Now it can be when there is an injury that needs help, you got wobbly knees, you need a knee brace. And that we might think of in terms of encouragement. You're kind of shaky, you're kind of worried, you're kind of struggling, you're anxious, you're going through grief and sorrow. People come alongside and encourage you. But you need to know parakletos. "Paraclete" is the word that's used for the Spirit, "cleat" "kletos." All of that is at least in one dimension is comfort, helping. And the other dimension it's sometimes translated "to exhort." Matter of fact, parakletos is is often to exhort someone, to correct them.

It's a lot the same. It's called in "alongside of." You may have wobbly knees, you call in a knee joint. But maybe you've got sometimes you see the kids that have issues with their skull as they're forming and they'll put that hard helmet on them. Right? The doctors will or any kind of orthopedic would, you know, put something, if something, especially in a growing body, to straighten it out like a splint. Even when you break your arm, you put it in some kind of cast or splint. It's straightening things out. It wants to go this way but you're going to use something to push it in the right direction. Well, we don't think of encouragement in that regard. You might think more like barnabi, son of a prophet. He's telling you what to do, he's correcting you.





Now, I think we take parakletos in this passage, paraclete, parakletos in this passage, and we think and we translate it encouragement because in this context, it sure looks like an encourager. He's giving money and it's generous. That's true. But we meet Barnabas later in the book, and Barnabas is doing more of the exhorting than he is encouraging. Because the church in Jerusalem, when Saul of Tarsus becomes a Christian, we know him as Paul the apostle, the church of Jerusalem did not want to accept him. They said, "Man, he is a persecutor of the church. We're afraid of him. Matter fact, if he wants to be a Christian, let him go to another place and go do his thing somewhere else. We don't want him in our church." Barnabas becomes the son of nabi, the barnabi. He becomes the son of exhortation by exhorting the people, "You've got it wrong, man." And he corrects them. I guess that's just to fill in this idea here. Barnabas, transliteration of Hebrew, son of encouragement, English translation of son of exhortation or son of encouragement. Both sides are true. But let me say, in taking the words son of beel, barbeel, it's just the opposite of that.

If Satan proved to be a worthless angel and if you're a barbeel, you're a worthless person to be a parakletos or a barnabi, you're a helpful person. You're helping when there needs to be a blanket put around a cold, shivering person and you are a corrective, a splint. You're like braces when something's out of whack and you got to go and straighten it out. Sometimes that's painful. It's always painful with your braces, right? So those are things that Barnabas was, he was a helpful person, helpful in correction and helpful in comfort when it was needed. In this particular context, as we'll see both in Barnabas' life as we study the book of Acts, we see here how great it is if someone is in need. Here was Barnabas willing to liquidate his assets to meet those needs. We see him in Chapter 9, strengthening the Church in terms of unity, we see him here in Chapter 4, helping the Church in terms of security.

So I want to put it this way because, of course, I'd like us all to help the Church be more of what God intended it to be. I want the blessing and grace of God to rest upon this church, and it's going to be when we have more Barnabases is doing what we're called to do. So let me put it this way on your outline, number three. We need to "Add to the Unity and Strength of God's Church." This is his church. It needs to be stronger. There needs to be more of that security and more of that unity, and it's happening when people like Barnabas go, "I'm here to be helpful. I want to be helpful." And the first thing he is, is helpful financially. And that's a great thing.

Matter of fact, when I think about people liquidating their real estate for the cause of Christ, not only do I sometimes speak to other pastors and they tell their stories, but I got a few of my own stories when I talk about the fact that here we were in a situation financially, it was a challenge, and literally, I'm talking about literal pieces of real estate, people have said, "Listen, it's a tax problem, it's an issue, I'm paying property taxes. Listen, I'm just going to give that to the church. Let me talk to someone in church on how to give that piece of property to you." Now, we're not a property holding company, of course, so we don't hold them. Sometimes we hold them for a little bit to see if we can build a church on it or do something with it. But usually we liquidate that and it goes into a fund and those funds end up being so helpful in doing the work of God around here.



Matter of fact, churches have been planted through Compass Bible Church and now a school has been launched to multiply and to supply for the planting of churches, and all of that is happening because of the generous gifts of people. Sometimes it's boosted like through a turbo charged boost when someone comes and says, "Well, I got this piece of land," and they give it. Now this is not a seminar about giving property, real estate, to the church, but if you got some and you want to talk afterwards, we will talk about that because that is always a huge help. Matter of fact, we had conversations this week about people saying, you know what? "I have some property and if I can help." I'm thinking that's a great thing. It's a great thing. And it's a huge boost. You know what it does? It helps us as a church do the work we're called to do.

Of course, most of us are giving as I do, as most of you do, I trust, giving incrementally every week as we get a paycheck, we give a part of that. It goes into a till. But, you know, when the church is stronger and we hit a windfall and we give more to the church, I'm just saying think about the needs that are met. When I look across the desk at a widow or I look at someone who's been orphaned or I look at a gal who loses her job in the midst of COVID, and I can say to them, "Listen, it's a good thing you're part of the church." It's great when I know there's a financial strength as the fiduciary responsibility is given to leaders in the church to make sure there's no needy person among us, that there's policies in place so that no one abuses that. We don't just have lazy people that are on the take or people that are, you know, just trying to take advantage of the system. I'm telling you what, how great it is when the bank account is at a place where the work can go forward. We can move the ball down the field. If someone is injured, we can repair it, we can fix it. When someone's in need, we can supply it. I mean, there's nothing better than that. I mean that's an amazing thing.

Matter of fact, if people just gave 10%, and again, this is not a sermon about giving, but if people just gave 10% of their regular income, I would never have anyone, even in the back of my mind, start to worry about being unemployed in our church if they were on a hard time and couldn't pay their mortgage. I just think about that. It would probably and I just say that because in the average church in American, in evangelical Christianity, even though we might be above the curve, because I think we've got some great godly people in our church, still if we took 10% of everyone's income and said that is now taxed to the church, we would quadruple, probably triple, I'd have to look at the current numbers, our annual budget. Think about that. If we do that, I mean, just think about not only what we can do in moving the ball down the field in ministry and planting, you know, training centers or churches or buying buildings for our church plant, not to mention buying buildings for us. Right? And not being renters. I mean, those are the things we can do handily as people like Barnabas step up and say, "I'm not going to be a son of a worthless person. I'm going to be the son of helpfulness. I'm going to be a helpful person," Son of, reflecting this, you are an embodiment of it.

But it's not just about giving to a church budget. It's about you looking around at your small group and saying there is a sociological standard and I'm going to make sure that in our day we're making sure we don't have any needy persons. I'll bet if I went back in the New Testament and I said, "Hey, they were feeding the widows in Chapter 6 of Acts." You wouldn't sit there and say, "Well, how many calories does a 65-year-old woman need? I'm just going to



feed her that." You would probably do more than one meal of rice a day. Right? You would probably want her to have, you know, three squares a day and be great if you could set her up with some granola bars for snacks in the afternoon. If someone in your church in the first century, if I'm Peter and this is our congregation and I say, "Hey, someone over here, Martha, does not have sandals." We could say, "I hope she has some sandals because Barnabas has a whole room full of sandals and his wife's got a ton of them. Let's give some of those sandals to Martha." I could say to Martha, "You really don't need sandals. I mean, I know people that like sandals, and that's good. But, you know, you can just walk a little faster when it's hot on the pavement. And the more you walk around in the dirt, the tougher your feet will get and the pain kind of goes away. And so you really don't need sandals."

You know, when somebody over here has their house burn down or maybe they get evicted, I could say to that person in the 1st century, well, you know, if you go into the Valley of Hinnom, there's a lot of little craggy rocks. You could really live in the craggy rocks. I know you need a roof over your head, but that would shield you from the rain and the wind. Just take your cloak, you'd be warm enough at night, go live in the crags of the rocks." That could work. One bowl of rice per widow. Right? You could walk around without sandals and you could certainly live in the crags of the rocks outside of Jerusalem. You don't need to house.

And yet when they said need, it was sociologically, relatively defined. And so it was Martha doesn't have sandals, she need sandals. Need food? Let's get you just more than the minimum calorie count. You need a house? Let's try and get you a place to live. I'm just saying in our day, you can start to think like, "Well, I know they don't have a car, but there is public transportation. That works pretty well. And I mean, you know, I know we got three cars, but, you know, come on. She gets from place to place." I'm just saying it's easy for us to think in a way you would never want them to think in the first century. And I want you to look at your lives.

It's one thing for you to give to the church, which is required and important, and if you gave generously and start giving real estate holdings, church could be healthy and do great things when the church is flush. But I want you look around in the places and the circles in the sub-congregations of the small groups you're in and go, "Now, wait a minute. I got a lot going on. I got stuff where I can take a vacation and I can go here. I got points on airlines. I got, you know, but here's someone in our group that does not. I know they can do fine without going on vacation, take a little staycation. You'll be fine." Or you could say, "No, no, no. I want to be helpful. How can I be helpful? Oh, I know, it's a situation where they could ride a bike to work. I get that. But, you know, it would be good, I guess, I've got this other vehicle. I could give it to you. I could sign it over to you. Now, I know you've got a situation where you could somehow, through public assistance, take care of this thing in your life, but let me take care of it in a greater way than is minimally required."

I'm just saying there are sociological standards of what you call need. And I'm just saying in a county like ours where everyone's got more than they really need and no one came to church without shoes, we're not handing out your first pair of shoes to you, I am saying you got to look around and really be reasonable about the fact that, hey, there's a lot we can do to care



for the quote unquote, "needy" among us. I want you to look at that close circle. I want you to, as it says in the book of Philippians, be able to look out to the interests of others. Since none of us are starving and none of us are going, you know, under an underpass to sleep tonight, I just want us to see how can we help, be on the lookout for those needs. Right? Look out for the interests of those in your church. It doesn't have to be funneled through the church for some tax write off to meet those needs. Reach out and do what you can so that someone can come to our church and say I see the grace of God on our church, not only through nourishing preaching, not only through the unity and fellowship that we have in our church, but I see it because needs are being met because it's full of a lot of Barnabases in our church.

"Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles, Barnabas, a Levite, a native of Cyprus," lived on that island there, or at least he came from there in the Mediterranean Sea, "he sold a field that belonged to him and he brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." I think in passages like this about the church becoming strong, even when guys like Peter and James and John and Thomas and the rest, I mean, here they were now the last first, they're there leading and brokering budgetary decisions and the strength of this, because God has called the right people together at the right time and the power of that team, that family that was going to go called the church, down that tunnel to get out onto the gridiron for another week of ministry facing the opposition of the world and the persecution of the world and the battle and the animosity of the world and hostility toward us.

They're strong, even though, as it says in First Corinthians 1, that there's really nothing quite unique about us. God didn't choose, as he says in Deuteronomy 7, us because we were the most powerful, the most numerically great, or, you know, because we were the richest or the smartest. He takes the simple things, the plain things, the small and the weak things, and he makes them strong. One of the ways he does that is not through a mystical, you know, weird spiritual way. He does it because he joins us together as a team, a team that's more than just a club that's associating to a philosophy or a pattern of life. It's the heart and soul of who we are. We're part of the church.

I moved offices by God's grace, we moved out from our old building over here and got to move into some nicer offices, which was good. One thing I wanted, I was 14 years in this office across the parking lot here, and I never had any windows. I had windows, but they were covered from floor to ceiling with books. One of the reason I looked so depressed all the time, apparently. I never saw the outside world for hours and hours a day. If it was raining or sunny, I wouldn't know. It just was a cave. I called it the cave. So when we were able to move across the street, one thing I asked for, I said it would be great if I could get some windows, you know, and not cover them with books. So that was one of my goals. So we got over there and I actually was able, I now have windows and we're moved in and my computer screen has got two windows next to it. So I get to kind of see the world, which is a little distracting, I realize sometimes, but at least I know if the sun is shining or it's raining.

I did that because I donated like about half of my library to the Compass Bible Institute. My books are downstairs, most of them. One thing I get to see now that I didn't get to use to see is like there's a tree right outside there. I look at branches most of the day and there are birds



that frequent that. Now I haven't name them or anything. I'm not a bird watcher, but I get to see these birds that come. And occasionally, you know, I just glance over there and they're doing their thing, doing bird stuff. It's just, you know, it's just, "Oh, look at the bird." When, you know, sometimes I regress back to my kid days, I think about if I had a BB gun it would be great, I could take take a shot at one of his birds. (audience laughing) But I would never say that out loud or tell anybody that.

So I kind of look down on these birds, bird-brain birds. Well, I'm studying for this sermon this week, thinking about the strength and the power and the greatness and the grace of God on the Church and how the Church becomes a fighting force for the rest of this book and how powerful they are. And as I'm thinking about, literally thinking about that, I'm jolted from looking at my computer screen because right here next to me, this window, there is a gigantic flock. Is it flock? Gaggle of birds. I don't know what it is. Army of birds, a gang. It was, trust me, it was a gang, like a Hitchcock kind of thick army of birds flying like right at me. I'm thinking about they must read my thoughts and know, you know, my animosity toward birds. And they're now on the attack. I literally snapped my head up like, oh, man, you know, it's happening. It's the birds are coming for me.

Now, of course, I had a window between me, but I thought they were all going to like, bam, bam, bam break my window down and eat my brain or whatever. But, you know, it's amazing how just, you know, they got... I didn't get to see it clearly because it just happened so fast. But, like, there's birds in the front and they just turn and right before they got to my window, they turned and then they circled back. It was like this dark cloud, this gaggle, gang, flock of birds. And I thought, wow, that kind of frightened me. Right? I would never admit that either. But it just like, Whoa. I thought of that Hitchcock movie that I saw when I was a kid that scarred me. I thought, it's amazing how birds become this strong, scary, intimidating thing when they just work together.

Paul said to the church, you've got to do everything you can to maintain the unity of the faith. You have to work at being a church, which is one heart, one soul, commitment to the preaching of the Word. The generosity of the kind of secure, peace-inducing, emboldening, strengthening experience of being a part of this thing that God's favor rests on. I just want us to feel that, to sense that for us in practical and intangible ways to contribute to that this week. Don't forget who we are and what a blessing it is to be part of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. God, we do want the church to be strong. We know we got our problems just like they did in the book of Acts. We want to get through them as they're going to get through them. Thankfully, we know where this book is going and there's victory here, even though the church is imprisoned, even though there are complaints about the Hellenistic Jews not getting the widows, getting their food, or even as we're about to see in Chapter 5 next week, Ananias and Sapphira being struck down because of their deception in wanting to be, you know, as great as Barnabas and be perceived that way.

So there are lots of problems obviously God, and we got our problems clearly. But we do pray, God, that we would be more unified than we've ever been, that we'd be growing at a





greater pace with an enriching kind of preaching that would change and challenge and affirm and nourish our spiritual lives. And that there would not be a needy person among us, starting with the need for a peace of mind. May everyone feel the security of being a part of the family of God as they function in this church. God, obviously, like every church, we need more Barnabases who are going to step up and add to those things. So I pray that would happen and the sermon would encourage that.

In Jesus name. Amen.