



Gospel Advance – Part 2

Grateful for Secondary Benefits

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Well, the last time we were together we started a study of Acts Chapter 8, and my study of that chapter led me to entitle our eight-part study of this chapter "Gospel Advance." Gospel Advance, which sounds real good as long as someone else is doing it because if I'm involved in advancing the gospel in my generation or my culture, my office, my neighborhood, it can be scary. It is a fear-inducing kind of thing. As a matter of fact, your last message, Pastor Mike, reminded us of all the cultural pushback that we can get and even persecution that we may endure if we try to advance the gospel in this world.

And all that is true. I understand it can be a scary thing. But I also want us to remember, as we'll see today in verses 5 through 8, that it should also be a joyful experience. There should be joy in the process. There ought to be joy, obviously, in the product. If you think about Luke Chapter 15, it was really surprising the extent to which Jesus went to say that when one sinner repents, I mean, there is joy in heaven, the angels in heaven rejoice. I mean, that's just an amazing thought that if you have success in advancing the gospel into one more person's life and they respond rightly by repenting of their sins and trusting in Christ, that there's some kind of joyful celebration in heaven, that's just a big deal. And of course, if you've ever experienced that, of course, that joy seems to overflow onto earth and you have a sense of gratification and fulfillment. How good it is to really be the agent that brings someone to faith in Christ. That's a good thing, a gratifying thing.

But sometimes we don't experience that, not because we are not well versed in the gospel, not because we're not good at defending the faith. Sometimes we may be really good at all those things, but we miss out on this joyful experience because it's something we're failing to do. And I'd like to look at that component that's often missing in our evangelism and it's found here in Acts Chapter 8, verses 5 through 8. And I think if we think this through carefully, we'll recognize there's a lot more to this other component than we tend to think. Particularly if we're just focused on that message, which is critical and essential and foundational. But there's more to it going on in this passage.

I'm going to read this for you from the English Standard Version. And I know even as I read it, you're going to throw a flag on the play. I just know you're going to throw a flag. You're going to say, "Well, that's a great passage, Pastor Mike, but I don't understand how we can do that." I get this. The book of Acts is a unique transitional book talking about, even in the book of Hebrews, how that first generation that was given a New Testament message did not have a written New Testament. Therefore, God was authenticating that. The word translated in Hebrews Chapter 2 is "to attest." There was an attestation of the message through miraculous signs. And we're going to see Phillip here go into a new region and he's going to do those things. And you think, well, that'd be great. I can have a lot more joyful experience doing evangelism if I could, you know, heal the sick and raise the dead and all that, too. I get that.



But do not dismiss this passage as we often do as, "Oh, well, yeah, they have special apostolic age kinds of things going on. And since it's different now, mine's just a duty and a drudgery and a fear-inducing process." Listen, there is something in this paradigm that you need to pick up that I think may change the way you even approach our task. Matter of fact, there's a lot of enjoyment that we can even get from the process of doing what God asks us to do beyond just sharing a message and I want to show it to you in this text.

So let me read it for you beginning in verse 5 when it says, "Phillip went down to the city of Samaria." Down to the city. Down. If you go to Israel with us, you'll know the Samaria is an area that now we call the West Bank. And if you know a little bit about politics between 1940 and 1960 - 1970, you'll recognize that that area there, the West Bank, is north of Jerusalem. Jerusalem and the surrounding region, Judea up north in the West Bank or what was then Samaria that is north, and yet it says "gone down." If we go to San Diego, we say we're going down to San Diego. If we go to L.A., we're going up to L.A. But in those days, particularly people that traveled on foot, even the topography would remind you Jerusalem is at about 2,500 feet above elevation, sea level, you left Jerusalem, the seven hills there, you would go down from Jerusalem.

Not only that, there's a kind of metaphorical sense in which, you know, this is God's important city. Right? Zion is the idealized, you know, vision of this city, Jerusalem. You're going to leave that city and go to some other city. Well, you're going down, you're going down. So going down from Jerusalem is whether you're going north, east, south or west and this is going north. So just, whatever, get your geography in mind and you can see Philip now going and why are they leaving? Look back up at the first four verses, because there was persecution that was breaking out. And so God was scattering his Church to do what he said should be done in Acts Chapter 1 verse 8, which is he was going to have these people be his witnesses, do evangelism, in Jerusalem, the capital, Judea, the region, Samaria, and then the ends of the earth.

Now, Samaria was an important region to identify because the demarcation of that particular place should be one that was mind-blowing for you theologically even, because the Samaritans, as you might remember from reading the gospels, they were not getting along with those in Judea and Jerusalem. The Jewish people did not like the Samaritans, which goes all the way back to the Old Testament in the 8th century before Christ, when the ten northern tribes, you remember we had one Israel broken down into twelve tribes. Well they split, you know, at about a thousand B.C. and then in 721 the Assyrians came in out of God's sovereign punishment of those northern tribes and he let Assyria come in and defeat them. And when he defeated them, he took many of them and hauled them off as slaves, just like we saw later in the fifth century B.C. when God did that, sixth century B.C., when God did that to the southern tribes.

But those northern tribes, those ten tribes, they were not only taken away as captives, many of them, but they were also settled by the Assyrians. The Assyrians came in from Mesopotamia and they came over and they basically occupied the lands and all the people who were left there, they began to just integrate with them and intermarry with them. And so



you had a lot of the syncretizing effect of religion, at least from the perspective of the Jewish people in Jerusalem and Judea and they saw these people as fully compromised theologically.

Now, they weren't fully compromised theologically, but they did reject all of the prophets and everything after the Pentateuch. So the first five books of the Old Testament, they adhered to and they believed in. But when they went back after the Babylonian exile and the return under Ezra and Nehemiah and they said, "Hey, we want to come worship there in Jerusalem at the rebuilt temple that Zerubbabel rebuilt, the Jews said, "No, you're not coming here. You are not going to worship in Jerusalem." And so they ended up in the northern tribes here, which ended up being called Samaria, they ended up building their own temple in a place called Mt. Gerizim.

All of that just to remind you of those little phrases in the gospel that you'll read. Whenever a Samaritan comes up, you'll often find some clarifying parenthetical statement like, "Oh, and the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Remember when Jesus was traveling through Samaria, which most Jews did not do, as he was getting up to Galilee, back where he was born, doing ministry up there up north where there was an enclave of Jewish people? He, it says, had to go through Samaria, which of course he didn't have to because most Jews went around the Transjordan across the Jordan River to get up to Galilee. But instead he went directly through it because he had a mission. He was preparing the way for guys like Phillip and the Church to do evangelism there.

And as he sat there with the woman in a place called Sychar, we call her the woman at the well because he has a conversation with her at the well, you'll remember that even she says, "Why are you talking to me? You're a Jew and I'm a Samaritan woman. We don't get along," because that was the animosity and hostility that the Samaritans had with the Jewish people. So Philip is going into theologically hostile territory, culturally hostile territory, but he goes in there just like Jesus had done, and he's going to share the truth about the Christ.

So let's read that sentence again. Verse 5, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria." We don't know which one, one of the cities. a major city, "and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord," ran him out of town because he was a Jew and they were Samaritans and they said, "We don't want anything to do with your theology." Underscore and highlight all of that. Do you see that there in verse 6? Hmm. Not what you would expect, "The crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and..." They're not just hearing him talk about the gospel and the Christ, "and they saw the signs that he did. "Two things here.

What kind of signs did he do? Are we talking about billboards, sandwich boards? What was he doing? No, no, no. We're not talking about those signs. Matter of fact, the word "sign" throughout the New Testament is used in a technical sense of these miraculous things that the apostles and Christ did. Well, here's a unique experience of someone, later known as Phillip the Evangelist, who's doing some of the things that the apostles did. Miraculous signs. Like what?



Well, the demons, they're always out for the worst in human beings, right? As John 10 says, Satan just wants to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to mess things up. And I'm on a sidebar here, but if you think about all the things the Bible says Satan wants to do in the lives of people, they're all destructive. They're all negative. And they're not all like, you know, heads spinning around and projectile vomit and eyes turning green. That's not, I mean, I know you've seen that on TV, but that's... I mean, he wants to mess up relationships. He wants to make factions in the Church. He wants to see families destroyed. He wants, you know, divorced homes. He wants, you know, all the bad stuff, including even physical ailments, as you saw Job's body being touched by Satan in the Old Testament, remember? All of that.

So "unclean spirits" who have it out for the worst of human beings, as Phillip comes into town, what was he doing? Well, he was doing things that ejected these spirits, "crying out with a loud voice, they came out of many who had them," and some of them had the effects of some kind of ailment like paralysis, "many who were paralyzed or lame were healed." Wow, that's amazing. "So that there was much joy in that city." You're talking about joy. Yeah, evangelism would be a whole lot better if I could just go to Mission Hospital, walkthrough and say, "Heal. Heal. Heal. Heal. Heal. Yeah, now let me tell you about Christ." "Yeah that's great. Awesome." That would be great. But that's not what you can do. I get that. I understand that.

But do not miss the paradigm. And the paradigm is there are two things that Philip is concerned with. About people getting their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you've got to get right with the Christ. You've got to know Jesus to have that experience. And what surrounded that were signs that pointed to the God who had the grace in Christ to save you. Hey, look at that God, he's a good God. Matter of fact, Fred, who is in a wheelchair, listen, I'm going to pop him out of that wheelchair. There's a good thing that God did. Now, listen to me about the Christ, because those two legs that weren't working that now are working are not going to work again because they're going to be laid in a tomb one day. So that is a temporary fix, even if there were blind people in that town. Right? Those eyes that now are seeing that weren't seeing, guess what? Those eyes are not going to be seeing in a matter of decades.

But that temporal thing is a big deal. It gets people's attention and it's a good thing. Any good thing, according to James Chapter 1 verse 17, is a gift from God. Anything good. "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." So when God does those good things, we know this: it's God injecting himself into space and time to provide things that are beneficial, that are favorable, that are enjoyable for human beings and human beings are in a state of rebellion, moral rebellion against God. And when God gives good things to bad people, which is what we all are, we call that in the Bible grace. God gives grace to people. He gives grace to people and we always think of grace in terms of the ultimate gift of grace, which is eternal life, which is bound up in the message of Christ. You get right with Christ, you get grace, you get to go to heaven when you should go to hell.

Hey, guess what? If you're in a messed-up world where things in the world are messed up, as he said would happen in Genesis 3, you are morally rebellious. You're going to live in a world



of physical rebellion. Even your body is going to rebel against you. God could have walked away and said, "Well, that's what you get. You get what you deserve." But instead, from time to time, we see in the Bible even miraculous things where God is saying, I'm reversing all that in a gracious act of mercy for people. Those are also grace, they're grace on a different scale.

Those are two kinds of grace and they're both good things. You just need to distinguish the two in your mind. Not to pooh-pooh the one, it's just to put it in perspective, and that is that there is saving grace or eternal grace and then there's temporal grace and that's any other good thing that God happens to do in this world. So let's, number one on your online, distinguish those, "Distinguish Eternal & Temporal Grace." They're all unmerited. We don't deserve anything good from God, but God does good things. And again you say, "I'm throwing a flag on that play right there because I cannot do those things. Maybe they were gifted to do those things, but I'm not a healer." Great. I get that.

Speaking of Samaritans, there was a Samaritan that Jesus talked about in a parable that he told coming, speaking of the elevation differences, going down to Jericho, which is down toward the Judean desert. I guess from your direction, it's this way and here's Jerusalem. And if you go there with us to Israel, you'll see we take a bus down a road that was probably parallel or near the road that they would walk on from Jerusalem down to Jericho. It's called the Jericho Road, obviously, and it goes through a lot of elevations and switchbacks and through the crags of the rocks. You can see that if you're a robber, that's a great place to jump out from behind a rock and rob someone. And that was a dangerous part of the travels in the ancient world.

And so Jesus tells a story they could all identify with saying, "Hey, someone was on the road to Jericho." "Oh, yeah, that road. I know that road. You better be careful. Watch your back on that road." Yeah. And you know what? A guy gets jumped and robbed, so he gets beaten and robbed and left for dead on the road. Jesus tells the story, this is the story of the Good Samaritan, but it first starts with two Jewish guys who see a Jewish guy laying in the street and he's bleeding out and he's in pain and he's just been robbed and he's got no money. First you get the Pharisee, you get the Levite and they're like, "Got no time for that."

You got a Samaritan who shows up in the story. He shows up and sees the man who'd been beaten, robbed, and he walks up to and he goes, "presto, change-o abracadabra" and he's healed. That's the story, right? Is that what happens? No. "I think I remember the story differently." Well, what do you remember about the story? What does the Good Samaritan do? Oh, he does something that I think the wife of the guy who got beat when she finds out that he was left for dead on the road is really glad that the Samaritan did. He did something great, gracious, merciful. He takes his wounds and he pours his oil from his backpack or his knapsack or the donkey's bags and he pours it on the wounds and he takes wine, the antiseptic, and pours it on the wounds. He takes bandages and he bandages him up. He puts him on his animal. He takes him to an inn to convalesce. He pays the fee. Of course, the guy has no money on him because he's been robbed. And then he says, "Listen, guy, if he racks up any other bill or needs anything, I'll be back by this way and I will pay whatever bill he racks up."



It's amazing, super gracious. And you know what the Bible says that we are to go and do the same and for God in this world, even if it's someone who's sick, though I can't say "abracadabra, presto, change-o" you're well, I can say let me do what I can do. And you know what? It's more than what the Levite and the priest did. They didn't do it. Why? Because they didn't want to, as we often say around here, go the extra mile. They didn't want to stay the extra hour and they didn't want to spend the extra dollar, all of which this Samaritan did. And Jesus says, "You go and do the same." Go and do the same. Go and do the same.

You know what, Phillip could go in there where there were people who were paralyzed and say, "Hey, stand up and walk." You can't do that? What can you do? What can you do as the extension of God's grace in this world to do good things? Well, then that is what you can do and that is what you ought to do. But you need to know that that is not all you should do. You should do what Phillip was doing, which is both. Because he recognizes one is a gift of grace and it's good, but it's a temporal grace. And then there's another grace and that grace is an eternal grace. I want you to have that eternal grace.

And that distinguishing categorization of these two kinds of grace is very helpful for us to think through. Because some people in their Christianity are just focused on the temporal grace. As a matter of fact, some churches are just focused on that. That's what we're going to be about, improving society. Right? We're going to start hospitals and we're going to feed people and send nets to the people who need them for, you know, their mosquitoes. We're going to dig wells. Listen, all of that's good. But that's not the corporate mission of the Church. The corporate mission of the Church is to give that eternal grace message, which is Christ and him crucified and proclaiming that to the nations.

Along the way, we will do the good works. But the point is we're concerned about the ultimate message which we are tasked to do. Now, it's "both-and" it's not "either-or." And we need to remember it's "both-and" and not "either-or." But Jesus said, if you really want to look at the value of both, remember this: it'd be better for you, to quote Jesus, to enter life, eternal life, lame, crippled, paralyzed, your feet don't work, than to have two legs that work and to be cast into hell. It's better for you to be blind. No sight. Right? To have that grace removed from your life and to enter eternal life than for you to have two eyes that can see really well and to be cast into outer darkness.

As a matter of fact, he compounds it with this statement, which I know you remember, what would it really, right? I'm using the word really, but that's just the rhetorical nature of the question. "What would it really profit a person if he gained the whole world?" Do you want to talk about grace? Do you want to talk about good things? If he had every good thing possible. I mean, anything that could have happened bad to him, he didn't have because God was so great. He didn't even have a headache. He never had a hangnail, "if he gained the whole world and lost his soul." And you know, the rhetorical answer to that is it really wouldn't be much. I guess it would be kind of a nice life you had, but it's temporal.



Now, I'm going to make the point, it's "both-and." But when it comes to what's going on here, you do know that in this text, look for the response to the gospel. You don't see it. There is going to be some response later and we know that people are going to have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. There was a lot of joy in the city, I'm hoping, because some people, like in Luke 15, I hope there were some people who were repentant of their sins. That's the ultimate profound joy. But there was a lot of joy because people were healed. So there's a good response from people for both graces. But I just want you to distinguish the two, and one, I just want you to know, is better than the other.

If I were to invite you over to my house this afternoon for a meal, come on over. Be there about 4:00 and you say, "Wow, Pastor Mike." And I'd say, I'm going to cook. So you're like, "I'm not going to have lunch. I hear he's a really good cook. Let's just see." This is all an illustration, a very fanciful illustration. But let's just say I'm really good at cooking and I got my apron and everything. And I even say to my wife, "Oh, sit down, put your feet up." She sits in the recliner on the sofa, and I'm in the kitchen and I'm just going, man. I got steak and prime rib and I put together an amazing dip for you. And I got a salad that I, you know, grew in the backyard. And I just, you know, I'm just going. I've got this. I got finger foods. I got appetizers. I got the best cashews you've ever tasted. I've laid everything out. I baked a cake, a huge stacked layer, chocolate cake. I mean, I got it all going on. My wife's just, you know, feet up watching YouTube and I'm doing it in the kitchen, whistling while I work.

On the way over to my house, you did something really stupid. You got in an argument with the motorcycle gang and you were really dumb and you said things you shouldn't have and you even pulled your car over and yelled at them. And you spit in the face of a couple of them and they chased you down to my house. Well you get in real quick and I noticed you were kind of going in the front door really fast. I'm like, "Hey, you're here. It's fantastic. Hey, I got some chips. I got some stuff, you know, enjoy." And you're like, "Well, I'm getting chased down by the motorcycle gang. They'll be here any second. And I hear the motorcycle gang coming. And it just so happened because I'm really into safety that I normally wear a bulletproof vest whenever I'm at home.

So I've got a bulletproof vest on underneath my apron and I go for my shotgun behind the door and I can't get to it quite soon enough because these motorcycle guys start coming through the front door. They got their guns out and they're gunning for you. Right? And I grab the shotgun as I throw myself in front of the bullets and you duck behind me and I get a bunch of shots right here in my Kevlar vest as I rack one into the shotgun and blow them all the way. (audience laughing) I have the kids drag the bodies out to the outside. I shut the door and I say, "Try this dip, it's so good." And you sit down and you start having some meals, you know, things you didn't fix, I fixed it all. You know, you're a little bit sweaty, but you're just, there you go. You go at it and I bring out the sizzling steak and you start eating it and you're like, "Oh, I've had it so much." Well, don't eat. Don't fill yourself up because I got this cake with this cake and I bring this cake out to you.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy Chapter 6. Deuteronomy Chapter 6 has never been introduced like that before. A lot of pastors have said, "Turn to Deuteronomy 6," they never set it up like



that, let me tell you. But with that in mind, look at this passage. And see if you can't see that all of these things, all of them, need to be kept in view, certainly by you as you go into this world knowing the connection between every good and perfect thing coming from God. And you know this, I just saved your life. And I also made you some cool dip. And I also made you a great salad. And I cooked some fantastic steaks and I baked you a cake. And you're enjoying all of those with all your enemies piled up outside right by my trash cans outside because they're dead. But you're alive.

And I got a little bruise and my ribs hurt a little bit because those bullets kind of hurt. But I'm OK. I think at some point what you'd want to do, at some point in the meal, probably often during the meal, be grateful, right? You should probably say thanks. I mean, there shouldn't be a moment in my house where you don't remember what I've done for you. Right? And I would say if all you did was focus on the one and not the other, whichever grace it was that you're concerned about, how I sacrificially gave my life for you. Right? And basically took a bullet for you and saved your life or whether it was that I made you a fantastic salad. I just think you need to remember them all.

Drop down to verse 10, Deuteronomy 6:10. Here they were coming into the Promised Land and this is what God says in Deuteronomy 6:10 to them. He says, "When the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers..." Let me go back in my illustration, I didn't even invite you, right? You were the plus-one, right? I invited someone else and you came with them but I still did all that for you. God's promise to bring them into the Promised Land was a promise he made and they were benefits of it in the wake of "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," they were the patriarchs and God made that promise to them and said, "Yeah, you're going to bring the plus-one into the Promised Land."

And that promised land, by the way, "great and good cities. You didn't even build them, houses," verse 11, "full of good things that you did not fill, cisterns," wells, "that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant -- and when you eat and you're full," and you're kicking back from the table, "then take care, lest you forget the Lord." Which, by the way, all those secondary benefits really all were subservient, at least in priority to this, "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Think about how the Lord redeemed you. Look at verse 13, "It is the Lord your God you shall fear him. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear." He should be the top priority for you. You always ought to remember the big thing and every other little thing, including, "This is a really cool well that I just got a great drink from and I didn't even dig that well."

Here's the thing, you're in God's house, all of your coworkers are in God's house. God causes "his sun to rise on the fields of evil and the good. He sends his rains on the crops of the just and the unjust." God is a God giving all those things. And the only people in the world who can rightly understand that and should be the ones always remembering that, is us. We remember that God is the giver of all good things. And you go into your world tomorrow morning and you need to remember this, someone comes and says, "I got a cool new car." You just need to remember, OK, grace of God. Or if you do something as an agent of good in



their lives, maybe you have "bandage their wounds" and "paid for their bills." And if it's a good thing and they enjoy it, I'm just thinking you need to remember these are the gifts of God.

Now, all of that should be seen as a secondary benefit. The ultimate benefit that we are proclaiming is Christ died for you. You can be redeemed. You're a slave to sin. You can be a forgiven child of God, an heir with Christ Jesus. That's the big news. So if you never said thanks for the meal, even if I saved your life, I'd still think something's wrong. We have to remember these two kinds of graces. Is one better than the other? If I said, "Oh, you know, I was going to cook, but I burnt the roast," and you didn't get anything to eat, if I just saved your life, I still think you should be thankful. If there are no secondary graces, but there are. There are so many of them. Just know, you need to distinguish those. If Philip came with a message and didn't heal a single person... Matter of fact, if he was just kind of a jerk about it all but still shared the message, hey, he's still offering them the words of life. But that's not how God asks us to do it.

Matter of fact, the paradigm, look at it back on our passage again in verse 6. It couldn't be said better than this. Matter of fact, we see what the signs are and they're supernatural. I get that in verse 7, healing the paralyzed. But look at verse 6 just as a paradigm for us. "And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Phillip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did." And I just want to say, you can't do the exact same signs he did, but you can do some, and they can be good, and they can fall under the category of good graces of God. You can be an agent of God's grace to everyone around you. And that's a good thing.

I put it this way, and it's got to be "both-and," Number two, "Do Good & Present the Gospel." Do good and present the gospel. Do good and present the gospel. You've got to do both and you should do both. You have to do both. Matter of fact, Jesus put it this way and I don't want to press the analogy too far. But he said in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, Chapter 5, he said, "You are salt and light." Right? Salt has to remain salty. If it's not salty what good is it? "Throw it out. It's going to be trampled underfoot. It's no good. You've got to be able to taste it." And then he says, "be light." "Let your light so shine before men."

A lot of those may focus on the good deeds themselves because that's how it ends, the good deeds that we're doing before people. But I know throughout the Scripture, the light usually categorically deals with the idea of the information that I'm sharing. Right? Even as Jesus said in John 3, I'm stepping into the light and it's exposing my deeds. Or in Second Corinthians 4, "The light and glory of God reflected in the face of Christ." I'm getting information. So light, let's just look at it this way, the idea of information has to be there. I have to present the message of you are a sinner, Christ came to die in your place as though he were the sinner, and he grants you eternal life, repent of your sins and put your trust in him. That's a hard pill to swallow, but it should be surrounded by salt. What does that mean?

When we salty, I don't want you to think of it as the idiom it is in English that we usually use. But think of it as a biblical phrase. Salt, I know you've heard these sermons, it restrains and preserves things, right? It restrains evil, but it's also something that makes people thirsty. If I



am one without the other, I got a deficiency. And I think for people like us, we study the gospel, we study how to defend it, but you need to make sure that everything is surrounded by the good that we do in effectuating positive impact on those around you. You have to be known for that. It has to be a part of who you are. We have to do good and present the gospel. Salt and light.

Let me give you some examples of this. They paid attention to Phillip. And you can be crass and say, "Only because he healed their friends." OK. And you may get a chance to share the gospel this week only because you are a good guy, only because you are generous. I get that. But we still got to do that. Turn with me to Luke 16. Luke Chapter 16. Here's an example. You cannot deny this is going to be getting people's attention. It will pave the way. You will get a hearing if you just practice this passage. They may reject your message, which we don't know even in the passage we just studied, that we're looking at today, if anyone in that paragraph is understood to have responded to the message of the Christ. I don't know. Later we find out that there is response in Samaria. But you may have the people not respond rightly to the gospel because they don't want to see themselves as sinners. But I'll bet you'll get a hearing if you start doing things like this. "Both-and."

By the way, let me make this parenthetical statement. You got a lot of people, not only churches, but individuals saying I'm going to, this is how the old... this is a cute little slogan, "preach the gospel and use words if necessary." Have you heard that one? Preach the gospel and use words if necessary. Cute but dumb. OK? Clever but stupid. You are not called to preach the gospel with your lives and think, "Well, I may not be necessary to use my words." It's always necessary to use your words. OK? But you've got to understand the setting of what we might say, preaching the gospel or the secondary benefits or having the grace that comes as a temporal gift to people around us. That has to be done as well. As a matter of fact, it ought to be strategically done.

And I know this is going to make you feel a little weird, but let's look at the passage together. Jesus is telling the story about the shrewd, dishonest manager. And if you know the story, great, but here's the thumbnail. The guy is knowing he's going to lose his job. So he goes and gives people financial benefit by cooking the books and the accounting gets a little twisted. He basically cheats his master, but he's giving people financial advantage so that when he gets booted from his job, he's got a couch to sleep on. Right? Because if someone saved you \$10,000 at work and then said, "Hey, you know, I need a place to stay this week." And you're like, "OK, you just saved me 10 grand. Of course. If you need to stay with me for a while? Absolutely." That's the parable.

Then Jesus, look at verse 8, "The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness," not for his dishonesty, not for cooking the books, but for his shrewdness. "For the sons of this world are more shrewd," they're more thoughtful, they're more strategic "in dealing with their own generation," in this illustration, "than the sons of light." And you should feel the slap. Ouch! I guess they're more strategic and thoughtful than we are. This is a parable about how a guy used finances to make them say yes when he needed a place to stay. Here's the punch line, verse 9, "I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of



unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails..." There's just a parenthetical "when it fails," but here's the so-that, "so that so that they may receive you into eternal dwellings."

Now, there's a lot packed into that. But let's just unpack it real quick. "Unrighteous wealth." Well, OK. The Bible doesn't put a big value on money the way most people do. They idolize it, they want a bunch of it. And we should be content with what we have. If God gives you a lot like Abraham. Great. It's a blessing from God, but we should not let it consume us. Right? It is "the root," First Timothy 6, "of all kinds of evil." It can be a bad thing. It is used for bad things every day. OK? But one day it's going to fail. And money fails and we both have the exact same economic status the day we die. Right? You don't take any with you. I don't take any with me. We're both broke at that point. There's no money in my wallet that matters at that point. So money fails.

So we're talking about crossing the threshold from this life to the next. And when we cross into the next life what really matters is whether or not I responded to the call of Christ, which is to trust in God, "Trust also in me," Jesus said. "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it weren't so, I would have told you, I'm going to go and prepare a place for you. And when I come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, you can be also." "So you need an eternal dwelling with me and you need to trust in God and you need to trust in me." That's great. I want an eternal dwelling. Good. I also now want to take in the meantime my worldly wealth and use it to, as weird as that sounds, make friends so that they can have an eternal dwelling. I want them to have one so that when it's barbecue time in the kingdom, "Hey, great, you can come."

Because here's the thing. I can use a lot of money to do a lot of things in this life. But if I can use it to pave the way to do something about securing them in an eternal dwelling, which is going to involve the gospel, which is going to involve presenting Christ, then that would be a good use of my money. And that is all about paving the way. Well, how did the shrewd, unrighteous manager pave the way? He gave people an economic advantage. He gave them that. Now he did it with someone else's money. I'm not saying that you should with anyone else's money. Don't steal money to give to someone else and say, "Now, let me share the gospel with you." Nope. I want you to take your money and do exactly what this passage says and make friends with that money so that God might enable you to do exactly what he has in view here, making sure those people got a place in the eternal kingdom.

And all I'm telling you is, if you don't think money gets people's attention when you are generous with your money with them, to give you a hearing about anything, they'll sit there and listen to you talk about politics if you are a generous person with your money. I guarantee it. I mean, go and skunk the waitress with no tip and try and talk to her about anything. Give her \$100 for a tip today at lunch and see if you won't be able to have a conversation. I mean, it opens doors and the Bible's very clear about that. That may sound weird to you, but the Bible says he's entrusted you with things, whatever they might be, to utilize those as secondary graces. Is it not a grace for someone to be economically advantaged in some way? If you can do that, that secondary grace might pave the way for you to have them pay attention to you presenting Christ, which is exactly what our passage is doing. The signs were



pointing people to Philip's message and they were at least listening. And we know some of them later we're going to respond.

If any of you in this room are not known as generous people at your work, you've got a problem. You ought to be the most generous... If you're invited to some coworker and they're having a birthday party or having a baby, so you're going to their shower or whatever, you ought to be someone who is generous. I mean, you can do that to a place of social awkwardness and I'm not saying, "Hey, I got a new car for you outside." That might be weird, but for you to go the extra mile and in this case, literally spend the extra dollar, the extra 20 bucks. The extra 40 bucks. The extra 80 bucks. Right? I guarantee you that's going to make friends and give you opportunities to talk about things that matter, which are ultimately the eternal grace of the gospel.

How about another one? Go with me to Titus Chapter 2. Titus Chapter 2. You say, "Well, I don't have a lot of money." Well, great, you should be generous no matter how much money you have. You ought to be building bridges with non-Christians. You ought to show them that you care about them more than you care about your money. But even if you were strapped for cash, look at what the Bible has to say here in Titus Chapter 2 about the way you can get a hearing with non-Christians. Look at verse 9. "Bondservants," that's a guy who doesn't have a lot of money, "be submissive to your own masters." I'll put it in the second person, right? He's talking to Titus about making sure the bondservants are submissive to their own masters. "Bondservants be submissive to your own masters in everything; be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything you may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."

You now are going to dress up what you got to say by, in this case, the disposition with which you work. Even Titus was called to do that. Look up at verse 7. "Hey, Titus, show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity," here's the showcasing of "dignity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that our opponents may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." Well, Titus is a good guy. Titus is a good guy. Titus is a dignified guy, an integrous guy, a generous guy. Nothing bad to say about that guy. I hope in your neighborhood, I hope in your workplace, I hope in your extended family, they see integrity, they see good work ethic, they see you being a person who cares more about those people than you do about your wallet. You need to be the kind of person who makes a statement by the good that you do and those things that you provide that are advantages to them, whether it's being that boss of a great employee, or whether it's the generosity that you provide them that they can look at you and say, "Yeah, I got nothing bad to say about them." As a matter of fact, they're more apt to listen to you because you are a good person than they would someone else who is your counterpart who may have a good message but has not built any relationship.

And I got to flip this back the other way again. When you see a guy with a bullhorn sharing the gospel on a street corner, which you don't see much of around here, but you've seen it before, right? Depending on where you go, maybe at the beach, whatever. Some of them are heretics. They're saying the wrong thing. Some are saying exactly what you know, "I know



that's true what he's saying," but a lot of you wince at that and you say, "Groan, relationship, I don't think they've earned the right to say that. And it's going to be rejected just because they don't even know these people." OK, calling someone a sinner and you don't know them, that's a lot harder pill to swallow. It's still a tough pill to swallow if you do know them and you built a relationship. But the point is you build the relationship and don't share the light of the truth of the gospel, that is a bit of a stinger. Right? Then here's the thing. It does you no good. It has to be "both-and." Do good. But also, present Christ. You got to do both.

Amos Chapter 5, verses 14 and 15. I don't have time to even look at that one, but there's just so much in the Bible about the things that we do. Which, by the way, have compounding effects in economy, in security and business and politics and society. We can make a positive difference just because we are Christians in our environment, bringing secondary benefits all the time to those around us. Now bring the eternal benefit, the eternal grace of the gospel.

All right, verse 8, just quickly back to our passage, Acts 8:8. Acts Chapter 8 verse 8. "So there was much joy in that city." I can flip this just a little bit and say at least imagine it's a lot easier for them to be joyful when the messenger himself is recognizing the good of what he's doing. And I don't want to make too much of that, but the passage says they were in the city, they were joyful, of course as they would be. If your cousin got healed and he was a paralytic and a beggar and now he's walking around and going to sign up for a job and getting an honest day's wage because he's healthy and working, you'd be happy, that would be joyful. If you were saved that day, you'd be joyful.

But Philip, I'm sure, was not a cantankerous, bitter man. As a matter of fact, all the good that God did through him in the city of Samaria there, I'll bet when he put his head on the pillow that night at the roadway inn or wherever he was staying, I'll bet there was a smile on his face, don't you think? "Dude, people got healed today. I shared the gospel." Maybe, I'm hoping he's thinking, "and that guy and that gal and that family, they put their trust in Christ today." That's a joyful thing.

In Second Timothy Chapter 2 when God analogizes, you know, our task, really specifically even the pastor looking at his compounded focus on the task, he says it's like being a soldier, it's going to be hard. It's like being an athlete, you got to keep the rules. But then he says it's also like a farmer. A farmer gets to share in the first fruits. He gets to share in the benefits of what happens. And here's the thing. If you are the agent of that salvation, if you are the person who is not found, but you are the shepherd that finds the lost sheep or the woman who finds the lost coin or the dad who finds the lost son, there's great joy in that. And all I'm saying is you need to be that and you need to be joyful and you should be grateful. Certainly the father was grateful that the lost son was found. Certainly the woman was grateful that the lost coin was found. Surely the shepherd was grateful to God that the sheep was found.

So let's just put it that way and let us be, number three, joyfully thankful. Number three, "Give Joyful Thanks for God's Gifts." And I mean, of course, it's a non... I mean, I don't even need to say it, when someone comes to faith in Christ, but even the things that move in that direction, even the secondary benefits that you bring in making your office a better place, and making



that shower a better experience, in being a part of a neighborhood where you make it a better, safer, more righteous place and you see the good that comes from that, give thanks to that. Give thanks to God for that.

And I would say this, we often don't even keep track of that, and you should. Psalm 103 verses 1 through 3, talks about us blessing the Lord. And it says one thing in verse 2. It says, "And forget not all of his benefits." Forget not all of his benefits. Remember all of his benefits is another way to put it. You need to start itemizing what are the benefits that God has brought into your environment. And I'm thinking, like Phillip, specifically through you. That's the subset in this sermon. The subset is I want to be joyful for the good things God is doing through me. Even in my industry. Right? There are cheats and people who steal and who compromise. Trust me, I don't care what you do. If you're a plumber and you think, "Well, a lot of people are ripping people off. I don't. If you think "I'm giving my employees what exactly, you know, an honest repair. Great. Let's take joy in that. Let's thank God for that. Let's thank God for the generosity, the hard work, the extra mile, the extra hour, the extra dollar, all those things. Let's just stop and be thankful for those.

And that is what we are to do and to see the connection of God working through us. When Jesus was talking in John 3 to Nicodemus, he says about coming into the light, people won't want to come to light because their deeds will be exposed. But he says this about people who do step into the light. When they do, they get to recognize and acknowledge that their work was, as the old translations say, "wrought in God." They were produced in God. They were done because God was at work in people. And people who step into the light, who repent and put their trust in God and Christ like you, I trust, have, and now you're going out there to advance the gospel you recognize this is a good thing God is doing in my little corner of the world. Take time to joyfully thank God for that. That's a good thing. Your office is a better place, your neighborhood is a better place because you're there, you're making the connection. The English Standard Version says, "His works are carried out in God." What a good thing, verse 21 of John 3.

A few weeks ago, our electricity went off in the middle of the Saturday night service. At that point, the sun was going down earlier, so it was dark. So we finished the service. This happened a few times in my years of preaching where we're preaching in the dark and we didn't have electricity. And that was all fine, right, no big deal, especially because we were out in the patio at that point and no big deal, even though all the lights everywhere went off. The problem was the electricity was off for hours. When the service was done, the staff and workers and pastors, we went back to our offices and it's the first time since the completion of Building 145 where Compass Bible Institute is where the classrooms and library and all that, the lounge and all the schooling is. Well, we've also put our offices over there. And so it's the first time we've ever been in our offices without light. We like it better with light. Let me just put it that way.

It was it was a bit of a hassle to try and grope around for your flashlight and figure out where things were and open drawers where you put your keys and it's like, "I can't figure this all out." Because like a lot of things, you don't really appreciate the light until the light is gone. Which,



by the way, is how you ought to view yourself, right? You are light in this world and, you know, light, if it were personified, should feel pretty good about being light because you do a lot of good for people. And if the light is gone, man, there's darkness and that's not good. If the salt wasn't salty in our community, it would be bad. If you weren't doing good and presenting Christ, the world would not be what it is. It'd be horrible. Matter of fact, you can make the case from Second Thessalonians Chapter 2, that the restraining work of the Holy Spirit is done through the people of God on this earth. And when he takes them out, it says, then "the man of lawlessness will be revealed" and really, just read the book of Revelation, all hell breaks loose on the earth.

You can think about a woman who lives in a home with all non-Christians, but she's a Christian. First Corinthians 7 says that one life makes God see that whole household differently. You are sanctifying in a practical way that whole household, God's blessing, God's favor in that home, just because there's one Christian there. One of the reasons that says we should think twice about bailing out on that because you are a sanctifying effect. And you turn on the news this weekend and you see, I don't know, people running for governor in the state of California and you go, what has happened in this world? Right? I mean, it's just like... I mean, a lot of us said it, "We are living in Sodom and Gomorrah." And I couldn't help but think about that. What a crazy culture we're living in. And I thought, man, you know, all my friends who live in other states that bag on me for being from California, I'm like, yuck, hope they're not watching the news this weekend, right? (audience laughing) I feel terrible. Yet, we do live in the land of fruits and nuts. This was craziness out here on the left coast.

And I couldn't help as it came out of my mouth, my wife's tired of me talking to the TV screen when I see this stuff but, I couldn't help but think about Sodom and Gomorrah. When Abraham was there and God said, "Done, we're destroying that place." Remember the story in the book of Genesis? And Abraham starts to negotiate because his nephew lives there. "What if there were 50 righteous people there, I mean, would you hold it off?" God says, "Yeah. I wouldn't destroy it if there were 50 righteous people there." Abraham thinks, "so there aren't," and then says, "What about 45? If there are 45 righteous people, would you destroy it?" God says, "Yeah, if there are 45 righteous people I wouldn't destroy it." Abraham then says, "I know I'm testing your patience God, but what about 40? Would you destroy it for 40?" You know the passage. 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, 10. He goes to 10 and God says he wouldn't destroy if there were 10.

Now he knows he's got a nephew there and his family thinking, "I hope they got a small group Bible study going on there because... (audience laughing). I mean, you mean to tell me they're not 10 people in that place? And you know what gets me about that whole story? Is that God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah had there been 10 people who were trusting God and following God. And I'm just thinking that makes light feel pretty good about being light. Can you imagine? Now the sad thing about Sodom and Gomorrah was there wasn't. That's why I'm hoping that all of you don't move to Texas to go on these church plants. Right? Don't leave me here.



So let's continue to be salt and light in this place because God, much like individuals in households that love God, even if you were the minority, if you're the singular person in a household, God says, First Corinthians 7, I see that house differently. My favor there rests on that place. It doesn't mean the people are saved and in our state, I'm just telling you this, right? Even in our country, in this world, God's still holding back what he would otherwise do because our job is not done and you are salt and light in this world. "But what good is the salt if it loses its saltiness?" What good is light if it's under a bushel and no one ever talks about the Christ? Let's go and do good this week. Present the gospel.

God help us, give us courage to be good. Just like Lot, it's not easy when you're down to a super low minority and even as it says in the New Testament, Lot's righteous soul was tormented every day. There are a lot of individuals, probably as the only Christian in their household who feel tormented every day. And there are people in situations all the time, even the remnant in Israel at particular times in the Old Testament, that their souls were battered because of the evil around them.

But, God, they had a role to play, and we do too, to continue to be the standard of what is good and right in our areas. Of course not absolutely, you're the only one that's absolutely right. But God, we reflect your holiness and your righteousness and your integrity and your honesty and virtue and hard work and generosity and all those things that make a difference everywhere we go. I pray that we would be known for that in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces, in the circles in which we run, and that we would not leave that void of words that speak of Christ, the Lord, who died like a lamb led to slaughter and willingly gave his life for sinners like us. So God help us please to speak up about that message this week as we live as salt and light in this community.

In Jesus name. Amen.